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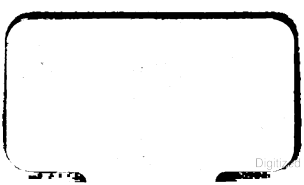

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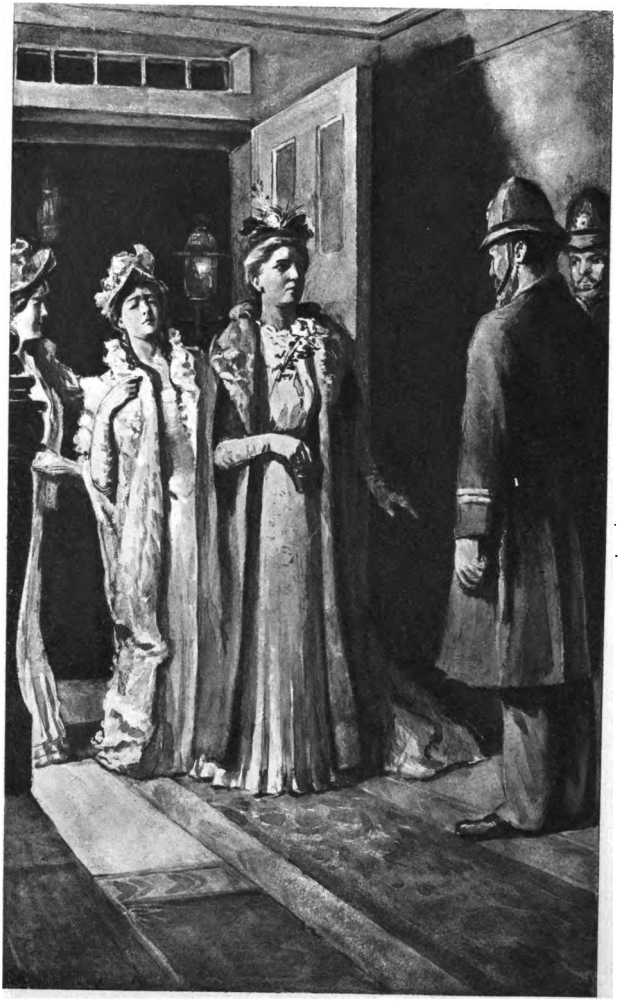

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THE EUSTACE DIAMONDS

BY

ANTHONY TROLLOPE

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THE EUSTACE DIAMONDS.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

SIR GRIFFIN TAKES AN UNFAIR ADVANTAGE.

WE must return to the unfortunate Lucinda, whom we last saw struggling with her steed in the black waters of the brook which she attempted to jump. A couple of men were soon in after her, and she was rescued and brought back to the side from which she had been taken off without any great difficulty. She was neither hurt nor frightened, but she was wet through; and for a while she was very unhappy, because it was not found quite easy to extricate her horse. During the ten minutes of her agony, while the poor brute was floundering in the mud, she had been quite disregardful of herself, and had almost seemed to think that Sir Griffin, who was with her, should go into the water after her steed. But there were already two men in the water and three on the bank, and Sir Griffin thought that duty required him to stay by the young lady's side. "I don't care a bit about myself," said Lucinda, "but if anything can be done for poor Warrior?" Sir Griffin assured her that "poor Warrior" was receiving the very best attention; and then he pressed upon her the dangerous condition in which she herself was standing, quite wet through, covered as to her feet and legs with mud,

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growing colder and colder every minute. She touched her lips with a little brandy that somebody gave her, and then declared again that she cared for nothing but poor Warrior. At last poor Warrior was on his legs, with the water dripping from his black flanks, with his nose stained with mud, with one of his legs a little cut, and alas! with the saddle wet through. Nevertheless, there was nothing to be done better than to ride into Kilmarnock. The whole party must return to Kilmarnock, and, perhaps, if they hurried, she might be able to get her clothes dry before they would start by the train. Sir Griffin, of course, accompanied her, and they two rode into the town alone. Mrs. Carbuncle did hear of the accident soon after the occurrence, but had not seen her niece; nor when she heard of it, could she have joined Lucinda.

If anything would make a girl talk to a man, such a ducking as Lucinda had had would do so. Such sudden events, when they come in the shape of misfortune, or the reverse, generally have the effect of abolishing shyness for the time. Let a girl be upset with you in a railway train, and she will talk like a Rosalind, though before the accident she was as mute as death. But with Lucinda Roanoke the accustomed change did not seem to take place. When Sir Griffin had placed her on her saddle, she would have trotted all the way into Kilmarnock without a word if he would have allowed her. But he, at least, understood that such a joint misfortune should create confidence, for he, too, had lost the run, and he did not intend to lose his opportunity also. "I am so glad that I was near you," he said.

"Oh, thank you, yes; it would have been bad to be alone."

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"I mean that I am glad that it was I," said Sir Griffin. "It's very hard even to get a moment to speak to you." They were now trotting along on the road, and there was still three miles before them.

"I don't know," said she. "I 'm always with the other people."

"Just so." And then he paused. "But I want to find you when you 're not with the other people. Perhaps, however, you don't like me."

As he paused for a reply, she felt herself bound to say something. "Oh, yes, I do," she said, "as well as anybody else."

"And is that all?"

"I suppose so."

After that he rode on for the best part of another mile before he spoke to her again. He had made up his mind that he would do it. He hardly knew why it was that he wanted her. He had not determined that he was desirous of the charms or comfort of domestic life. He had not even thought where he would live were he married. He had not suggested to himself that Lucinda was a desirable companion, that her temper would suit his, that her ways and his were sympathetic, or that she would be a good mother to the future Sir Griffin Tewett. He had seen that she was a very handsome girl, and therefore he had thought that he would like to possess her. Had she fallen like a ripe plum into his mouth, or shown herself ready so to fall, he would probably have closed his lips and backed out of the affair. But the difficulty no doubt added something to the desire. "I had hoped," he said, "that after knowing each other so long there might have been more than that."

She was again driven to speak because he paused. "I don't know that that makes much difference."

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"Miss Roanoke, you can't but understand what I mean."

"I 'm sure I don't," said she.

"Then I 'll speak plainer."

"Not now, Sir Griffin, because I 'm so wet."

"You can listen to me even if you will not answer me. I am sure that you know that I love you better than all the world. Will you be mine?" Then he moved on a little forward so that he might look back into her face. "Will you allow me to think of you as my future wife?"

Miss Roanoke was able to ride at a stone wall or at a river, and to ride at either the second time when her horse balked the first. Her heart was big enough to enable her to give Sir Griffin an answer. Perhaps it was that, in regard to the river and the stone wall, she knew what she wanted; but that, as to Sir Griffin, she did not. "I don't think this is a proper time to ask," she said.

"Why not?"

"Because I am wet through and cold. It is taking an unfair advantage."

"I did n't mean to take any unfair advantage," said Sir Griffin scowling; "I thought we were alone——"

"Oh, Sir Griffin, I am so tired!" As they were now entering Kilmarnock, it was quite clear that he could press her no further. They clattered up, therefore, to the hotel, and he busied himself in getting a bedroom fire lighted, and in obtaining the services of the landlady. A cup of tea was ordered and toast, and in two minutes Lucinda Roanoke was relieved from the presence of the baronet.

"It 's a kind of thing a fellow does n't quite understand," said Sir Griffin to himself. "Of course she

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means it, and why the devil can't she say so?" He had no idea of giving up the chase, but he thought that perhaps he would take it out of her when she became Lady Tewett.

They were an hour at the inn before Mrs. Carbuncle and Lady Eustace arrived, and during that hour Sir Griffin did not see Miss Roanoke. For this there was, of course, ample reason. Under the custody of the landlady, Miss Roanoke was being made dry and clean, and was by no means in a condition to receive a lover's vows. The baronet sent up half a dozen messages as he sauntered about the yard of the inn, but he got no message in return. Lucinda, as she sat drinking her tea and drying her clothes, did no doubt think about him, but she thought about him as little as she could. Of course he would come again, and she could make up her mind then. It was no doubt necessary that she should do something. Her fortune, such as it was, would soon be spent in the adventure of finding a husband. She also had her ideas about love, and had enough of sincerity about her to love a man thoroughly; but it had seemed to her that all the men who came near her were men whom she could not fail to dislike. She was hurried here and hurried there, and knew nothing of real social intimacies. As she told her aunt in her wickedness, she would almost have preferred a shoemaker, if she could have become acquainted with a shoemaker in a manner that should be unforced and genuine. There was a savageness of antipathy in her to the mode of life which her circumstances had produced for her. It was that very savageness which made her ride so hard, and which forbade her to smile and be pleasant to people whom she could

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not like. And yet she knew that something must be done. She could not afford to wait as other girls might do. Why not Sir Griffin as well as any other fool? It may be doubted whether she knew how obstinate, how hard, how cruel to a woman a fool can be.

Her stockings had been washed and dried, and her boots and trousers were nearly dry, when Mrs. Carbuncle, followed by Lizzie, rushed into the room. "Oh, my darling, how are you?" said the aunt, seizing her niece in her arms.

"I 'm only dirty now," said Lucinda.

"We 've got off the biggest of the muck, my lady," said the landlady.

"Oh, Miss Roanoke," said Lizzie, "I hope you don't think I behaved badly in going on."

"Everybody always goes on, of course," said Lucinda.

"I did so pray Lord George to let me try and jump back to you. We were over, you know, before it happened. But he said it was quite impossible. We did wait till we saw you were out."

"It did n't signify at all, Lady Eustace."

"And I was so sorry when I went through the wall at the corner of the wood before you. But I was so excited I hardly knew what I was doing." Lucinda, who was quite used to these affairs in the hunting-field, simply nodded her acceptance of this apology. "But it was a glorious run, was n't it?"

"Pretty well," said Mrs. Carbuncle.

"Oh, it was glorious; but then I got over the river. And, oh, if you had been there afterwards. There was such an adventure between a man in a gig and my cousin Frank." Then they all went to the train, and were carried home to Portray.

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CHAPTER XL.

YOU ARE NOT ANGRY.

On their journey back to Portray, the ladies were almost too tired for talking, and Sir Griffin was sulky. Sir Griffin had as yet heard nothing about Greystock's adventure, and did not care to be told. But when once they were at the castle, and had taken warm baths and glasses of sherry, and got themselves dressed and had come down to dinner, they were all very happy. To Lizzie it had certainly been the most triumphant day of her life. Her marriage with Sir Florian had been triumphant, but that was only a step to something good that was to come after. She then had at her own disposal her little wits and her prettiness, and a world before her in which, as it then seemed to her, there was a deal of pleasure if she could only reach it. Up to this period of her career she had hardly reached any pleasure; but this day had been very pleasant. Lord George de Bruce Carruthers had in truth been her Corsair, and she had found the thing which she liked to do, and would soon know how to do. How glorious it was to jump over that black, yawning stream, and then to see Lucinda fall into it! And she could remember every jump, and her feeling of ecstasy as she landed on the right side. And she had by heart every kind word that Lord George had said to her — and she loved the sweet, pleasant, Cor-

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sair-like intimacy that had sprung up between them. She wondered whether Frank was at all jealous. It would n't be amiss that he should be a little jealous. And then somebody had brought home in his pocket the fox's brush, which the master of the hounds had told the huntsman to give her. It was all delightful; and so much more delightful because Mrs. Carbuncle had not gone quite so well as she liked to go, and because Lucinda had fallen into the water.

They did not dine till past eight, and the ladies and gentlemen all left the room together. Coffee and liqueurs were to be brought into the drawing-room, and they were all to be intimate, comfortable, and at their ease; all except Sir Griffin Tewett, who was still very sulky.

"Did he say anything?" Mrs. Carbuncle had asked.

"Yes."

"Well."

"He proposed; but of course I could not answer him when I was wet through." There had been but a moment, and in that moment this was all that Lucinda would say.

"Now I don't mean to stir again," said Lizzie, throwing herself into a corner of a sofa, "till somebody carries me to bed. I never was so tired in all my life." She was tired, but there is a fatigue which is delightful as long as all the surroundings are pleasant and comfortable.

"I did n't call it a very hard day," said Mrs. Carbuncle.

"You only killed one fox," said Mr. Mealyus, pretending a delightfully clerical ignorance, "and on Monday you killed four. Why should you be tired?"

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"I suppose it was nearly twenty miles," said Frank, who was also ignorant.

"About ten, perhaps," said Lord George. "It was an hour and forty minutes, and there was a good bit of slow hunting after we had come back over the river."

"I'm sure it was thirty," said Lizzie, forgetting her fatigue in her energy.

"Ten is always better than twenty," said Lord George, "and five generally better than ten."

"It was just whatever is best," said Lizzie. "I know Frank's friend, Mr. Nappie, said it was twenty. By-the-by, ought n't we to have asked Mr. Nappie home to dinner?"

"I thought so," said Frank; "but I could n't take the liberty myself."

"I really think poor Mr. Nappie was very badly used," said Mrs. Carbuncle.

"Of course he was," said Lord George; "no man ever worse since hunting was invented. He was entitled to a dozen dinners and no end of patronage; but you see he took it out in calling your cousin Mr. Greystockings."

"I felt that blow," said Frank.

"I shall always call you Cousin Greystockings," said Lizzie.

"It was hard," continued Lord George, "and I understood it all so well when he got into a mess in his wrath about booking the horse to Kilmarnock. If the horse had been on the roadside, he or his men could have protected him. He is put under the protection of a whole railway company, and the company gives him up to the first fellow that comes and asks for him."

"It was cruel," said Frank.

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"If it had happened to me, I should have been very angry," said Mrs. Carbuncle.

"But Frank would n't have had a horse at all," said Lizzie, "unless he had taken Mr. Nappie's."

Lord George still continued his plea for Mr. Nappie. "There 's something in that certainly; but, still, I agree with Mrs. Carbuncle. If it had happened to me, I should — just have committed murder and suicide. I can't conceive anything so terrible. It 's all very well for your noble master to talk of being civil, and hoping that the horse had carried him well, and all that. There are circumstances in which a man can't be civil. And then everybody laughed at him! It 's the way of the world. The lower you fall, the more you 're kicked."

"What can I do for him?" asked Frank.

"Put him down at your club and order thirty dozen of gray shirtings from Nappie & Co., without naming the price."

"He 'd send you gray stockings instead," said Lizzie.

But though Lizzie was in heaven, it behooved her to be careful. The Corsair was a very fine specimen of the Corsair breed, about the best Corsair she had ever seen, and had been devoted to her for the day. But these Corsairs are known to be dangerous, and it would not be wise that she should sacrifice any future prospect of importance on behalf of a feeling, which, no doubt, was founded on poetry, but which might too probably have no possible beneficial result. As far as she knew, the Corsair had not even an island of his own in the Ægean Sea. And, if he had, might not the island too probably have a Medora or two of its own? In a ride across the country the Corsair was all that a

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Corsair should be; but knowing, as she did, but very little of the Corsair, she could not afford to throw over her cousin for his sake. As she was leaving the drawing-room she managed to say one word to her cousin. "You were not angry with me because I got Lord George to ride with me instead of you?"

"Angry with you?"

"I knew I should only be a hindrance to you."

"It was a matter of course. He knows all about it, and I know nothing. I am very glad that you liked it so much."

"I did like it; and so did you. I was so glad you got that poor man's horse. You were not angry then?" They had now passed across the hall, and were on the bottom stair.

"Certainly not."

"And you are not angry for what happened before?" She did not look into his face as she asked this question, but stood with her eyes fixed on the stair-carpet.

"Indeed no."

"Good night, Frank."

"Good night, Lizzie." Then she went, and he returned to a room below which had been prepared for purposes of tobacco and soda-water and brandy.

"Why, Griff, you 're rather out of sorts to-night," said Lord George to his friend, before Frank had joined them.

"So would you be out of sorts if you 'd lost your run and had to pick a young woman out of the water. I don't like young women when they 're damp and smell of mud."

"You mean to marry her, I suppose."

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"How would you like me to ask you questions? Do you mean to marry the widow? And, if you do, what 'll Mrs. Carbuncle say? And if you don't, what do you mean to do; and all the rest of it?"

"As for marrying the widow, I should like to know the facts first. As to Mrs. C., she would n't object in the least. I generally have my horses so bitted that they can't very well object. And as to the other question, I mean to stay here for the next fortnight, and I advise you to make it square with Miss Roanoke. Here 's my lady's cousin; for a man who does n't ride often, he went very well to-day."

"I wonder if he 'd take a twenty-pound note if I sent it to him," said Frank, when they broke up for the night. "I don't like the idea of riding such a fellow's horse for nothing."

"He 'll bring an action against the railway, and then you can offer to pay if you like." Mr. Nappie did bring an action against the railway, claiming exorbitant damages; but with what result, we need not trouble ourselves to inquire.

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CHAPTER XLI.

LIKEWISE THE BEARS IN COUPLES AGREE.

FRANK GREYSTOCK stayed till the following Monday at Portray, but could not be induced to hunt on the Saturday, on which day the other sporting men and women went to the meet. He could not, he said, trust to that traitor MacFarlane, and he feared that his friend Mr. Nappie would not give him another mount on the gray horse. Lizzie offered him one of her two darlings, an offer which he, of course, refused; and Lord George also proposed to put him up. But Frank averred that he had ridden his hunt for that season, and would not jeopardise the laurels he had gained. "And moreover," said he, "I should not dare to meet Mr. Nappie in the field." So he remained at the castle and took a walk with Mr. Mealyus. Mr. Mealyus asked a good many questions about Portray, and exhibited the warmest sympathy with Lizzie's widowed condition. He called her a "sweet, gay, unsophisticated, light-hearted young thing."

"She is very young," replied her cousin. "Yes," he continued, in answer to further questions; "Portray is certainly very nice. I don't know what the income is. Well, yes. I should think it is over a thousand. Eight! No, I never heard it said that it was as much as that." When Mr. Mealyus put it down in his mind

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as five, he was not void of acuteness, as very little information had been given to him.

There was a joke throughout the castle that Mr. Mealyus had fallen in love with Miss Macnulty. They had been a great deal together on those hunting days; and Miss Macnulty was unusually enthusiastic in praise of his manner and conversation. To her, also, had been addressed questions as to Portray and its income, all of which she had answered to the best of her ability; not intending to betray any secret, for she had no secret to betray; but giving ordinary information on that commonest of all subjects, our friends' incomes. Then there had risen a question whether there was a vacancy for such promotion to Miss Macnulty. Mrs. Carbuncle had certainly heard that there was a Mrs. Emilius. Lucinda was sure that there was not, an assurance which might have been derived from a certain eagerness in the reverend gentleman's demeanour to herself on a former occasion. To Lizzie, who at present was very good-natured, the idea of Miss Macnulty having a lover, whether he were a married man or not, was very delightful. "I 'm sure I don't know what you mean," said Miss Macnulty. "I don't suppose Mr. Emilius had any of the kind." Upon the whole, however, Miss Macnulty liked it.

On the Saturday nothing especial happened. Mr. Nappie was out on his gray horse, and condescended to a little conversation with Lord George. He would n't have minded, he said, if Mr. Greystock had come forward; but he did think Mr. Greystock had n't come forward as he ought to have done. Lord George professed that he had observed the same thing; but then, as he whispered into Mr. Nappie's ear, Mr.

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Greystock was particularly known as a bashful man. "He did n't ride my 'orse anyway bashful," said Mr. Nappie — all of which was told at dinner in the evening amidst a great deal of laughter. There had been nothing special in the way of sport, and Lizzie's enthusiasm for hunting, though still high, had gone down a few degrees below fever heat. Lord George had again coached her; but there had been no great need for coaching, no losing of her breath, no cutting down of Lucinda, no river, no big wall — nothing, in short, very fast. They had been much in a big wood; but Lizzie, in giving an account of the day to her cousin, had acknowledged that she had not quite understood what they were doing at any time.

"It was a-blowing of horns and a-galloping up and down all the day," she said; "and then Morgan got cross again and scolded all the people. But there was one nice paling, and Dandy flew over it beautifully. Two men tumbled down, and one of them was a good deal hurt. It was very jolly — but not at all like Wednesday."

Nor had it been like Wednesday to Lucinda Roanoke, who did not fall into the water, and who did accept Sir Griffin when he again proposed to her in Sarkie wood. A great deal had been said to Lucinda on the Thursday and the Friday by Mrs. Carbuncle — which had not been taken at all in good part by Lucinda. On those days Lucinda kept as much as she could out of Sir Griffin's way, and almost snapped at the baronet when he spoke to her. Sir Griffin swore to himself that he was n't going to be treated that way. He 'd have her, by George! There are men in whose love a good deal of hatred is mixed — who love as the

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huntsman loves the fox, towards the killing of which he intends to use all his energies and intellects. Mrs. Carbuncle, who did not quite understand the sort of persistency by which a Sir Griffin can be possessed, feared greatly that Lucinda was about to lose her prize, and spoke out accordingly.

"Will you, then, just have the kindness to tell me what it is you propose to yourself?" asked Mrs. Carbuncle.

"I don't propose anything."

"And where will you go when your money 's done?"

"Just where I am going now," said Lucinda. By which it may be feared that she indicated a place to which she should not on such an occasion have made an allusion.

"You don't like anybody else?" suggested Mrs. Carbuncle.

"I don't like anybody or anything," said Lucinda.

"Yes, you do — you like horses to ride, and dresses to wear."

"No, I don't. I like hunting because, perhaps, some day I may break my neck. It 's no use your looking like that, Aunt Jane. I know what it all means. If I could break my neck it would be the best thing for me."

"You 'll break my heart, Lucinda."

"Mine 's broken long ago."

"If you 'll accept Sir Griffin, and just get a home round yourself, you 'll find that everything will be happy. It all comes from the dreadful uncertainty. Do you think I have suffered nothing? Carbuncle is always threatening that he 'll go back to New York;

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and as for Lord George, he treats me that way I 'm sometimes afraid to show my face."

"Why should you care for Lord George?"

"It 's all very well to say, why should I care for him. I don't care for him, only one does n't want to quarrel with one's friends. Carbuncle says he owes him money."

"I don't believe it," said Lucinda.

"And he says Carbuncle owes him money."

"I do believe that," said Lucinda.

"Between it all, I don't know which way to be turning. And now, when there 's this great opening for you, you won't know your own mind."

"I know my mind well enough."

"I tell you you 'll never have such another chance. Good looks is n't everything. You 've never a word to say to anybody; and when a man does come near you, you 're as savage and cross as a bear."

"Go on, Aunt Jane."

"What with your hatings and dislikings, one would suppose you did n't think God Almighty made men at all."

"He made some of 'em very bad," said Lucinda. "As for some others, they 're only half made. What can Sir Griffin do, do you suppose?"

"He 's a gentleman."

"Then if I were a man, I should wish not to be a gentleman; that 's all. I 'd a deal sooner marry a man like that huntsman, who has something to do and knows how to do it." Again she said, "Don't worry any more, Aunt Jane. It does n't do any good. It seems to me that to make myself Sir Griffin's wife would be impossible; but I 'm sure your talking won't

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do it." Then her aunt left her, and, having met Lord George, at his bidding went and made civil speeches to Lizzie Eustace.

That was on the Friday afternoon. On the Saturday afternoon Sir Griffin, biding his time, found himself, in a ride with Lucinda, sufficiently far from other horsemen for his purpose. He was n't going to stand any more nonsense. He was entitled to an answer, and he knew that he was entitled, by his rank and position, to a favourable answer. Here was a girl who, as far as he knew, was without a shilling, of whose birth and parentage nobody knew anything, who had nothing but her beauty to recommend her — nothing but that and a certain capacity for carrying herself in the world as he thought ladies should carry themselves; and she was to give herself airs with him, and expect him to propose to her half a dozen times! By George! he had a very good mind to go away and let her find out her mistake. And he would have done so — only that he was a man who always liked to have all that he wanted. It was intolerable to him that anybody should refuse him anything. "Miss Roanoke," he said; and then he paused.

"Sir Griffin," said Lucinda, bowing her head.

"Perhaps you will condescend to remember what I had the honour of saying to you as we rode into Kilmarnock last Wednesday."

"I had just been dragged out of a river, Sir Griffin, and I don't think any girl ought to be asked to remember what was said to her in that condition."

"If I say it again now, will you remember?"

"I cannot promise, Sir Griffin."

"Will you give me an answer?"

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"That must depend."

"Come, I will have an answer. When a man tells a lady that he admires her, and asks her to be his wife, he has a right to an answer. Don't you think that in such circumstances a man has a right to expect an answer?"

Lucinda hesitated for a moment, and he was beginning again to remonstrate impatiently, when she altered her tone, and replied to him seriously: "In such circumstances a gentleman has a right to expect an answer."

"Then give me one. I admire you above all the world, and I ask you to be my wife. I 'm quite in earnest."

"I know that you are in earnest, Sir Griffin. I would do neither you nor myself the wrong of supposing that it could be otherwise."

"Very well then. Will you accept the offer that I make you?"

Again she paused. "You have a right to an answer, of course; but it may be so difficult to give it. It seems to me that you have hardly realised how serious a question it is."

"Have n't I though? By George, it is serious."

"Will it not be better for you to think it over again?"

He now hesitated for a moment. Perhaps it might be better. Should she take him at his word there would be no going back from it. But Lord George knew that he had proposed before. Lord George had learned this from Mrs. Carbuncle, and had shown that he knew it. And then, too, he had made up his mind about it. He wanted her, and he meant to have her. "It requires no more thinking with me, Lucinda. I 'm

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not a man who does things without thinking; and when I have thought I don't want to think again. There 's my hand — will you have it?"

"I will," said Lucinda, putting her hand into his. He no sooner felt her assurance than his mind misgave him that he had been precipitate, that he had been rash, and that she had taken advantage of him. After all, how many things are there in the world more precious than a handsome girl. And she had never told him that she loved him.

"I suppose you love me?" he asked.

"H'sh; here they all are." The hand was withdrawn, but not before both Mrs. Carbuncle and Lady Eustace had seen it.

Mrs. Carbuncle, in her great anxiety, bided her time, keeping close to her niece. Perhaps she felt that if the two were engaged, it might be well to keep the lovers separated for a while, lest they should quarrel before the engagement should have been so confirmed by the authority of friends as to be beyond the power of easy annihilation. Lucinda rode quite demurely with the crowd. Sir Griffin remained near her, but without speaking. Lizzie whispered to Lord George that there had been a proposal. Mrs. Carbuncle sat in stately dignity on her horse, as though there was nothing which at that moment especially engaged her attention. An hour almost had passed before she was able to ask the important question, "Well — what have you said to him?"

"Oh; just what you would have me."

"You have accepted him?"

"I suppose I was obliged. At any rate I did. You shall know one thing, Aunt Jane, at any rate, and I

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hope it will make you comfortable. I hate a good many people; but of all the people in the world I hate Sir Griffin Tewett the worst."

"Nonsense, Lucinda."

"It shall be nonsense, if you please; but it's true. I shall have to lie to him, but there shall be no lying to you, however much you may wish it. I hate him!"

This was very grim, but Mrs. Carbuncle quite understood that to persons situated in great difficulty things might be grim. A certain amount of grimness must be endured. And she knew, too, that Lucinda was not a girl to be driven without showing something of an intractable spirit in harness. Mrs. Carbuncle had undertaken the driving of Lucinda, and had been not altogether unsuccessful. The thing so necessary to be done was now effected. Her niece was engaged to a man with a title, to a man reported to have a fortune, to a man of family, and a man of the world. Now that the engagement was made, the girl could not go back from it, and it was for Mrs. Carbuncle to see that neither should Sir Griffin go back. Her first steps must be taken at once. The engagement should be made known to all the party, and should be recognised by some word spoken between herself and the lover. The word between herself and the lover must be the first thing. She herself, personally, was not very fond of Sir Griffin; but on such an occasion as this she could smile and endure the bear. Sir Griffin was a bear — but so also was Lucinda. "The rabbits and hares All go in pairs; And likewise the bears In couples agree." Mrs. Carbuncle consoled herself with the song, and assured herself that it would all come right. No doubt the she-bears were not as civil to the he-bears as

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the turtle doves are to each other. It was perhaps her misfortune that her niece was not a turtle dove; but, such as she was, the best had been done for her.

"Dear Sir Griffin," she said on the first available opportunity, not caring much for the crowd, and almost desirous that her very words should be overheard, "my darling girl has made me so happy by what she has told me."

"She has n't lost any time," said Sir Griffin.

"Of course she would lose no time. She is the same to me as a daughter. I have no child of my own, and she is everything to me. May I tell you that you are the luckiest man in Europe?"

"It is n't every girl that would suit me, Mrs. Carbuncle."

"I am sure of that. I have noticed how particular you are. I won't say a word of Lucinda's beauty; men are better judges of that than women; but for high chivalrous spirit, for true principle and nobility, and what I call downright worth, I don't think you will easily find her superior. And she is as true as steel."

"And about as hard, I was beginning to think."

"A girl like that, Sir Griffin, does not give herself away easily. You will not like her the less for that now that you are the possessor. She is very young, and has known my wish that she should not engage herself to any one quite yet. But as it is, I cannot regret anything."

"I dare say not," said Sir Griffin.

That the man was a bear was a matter of course, and bears probably do not themselves know how bearish they are. Sir Griffin, no doubt, was unaware of the extent of his own rudeness. And his rudeness mat-

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tered but little to Mrs. Carbuncle, so long as he acknowledged the engagement. She had not expected a lover's raptures from the one more than from the other. And was not there enough in the engagement to satisfy her? She allowed, therefore, no cloud to cross her brow as she rode up alongside of Lord George. "Sir Griffin has proposed, and she has accepted him," she said in a whisper. She was not now desirous that any one should hear her but he to whom she spoke.

"Of course she has," said Lord George.

"I don't know about that, George. Sometimes I thought she would, and sometimes that she would n't. You have never understood Lucinda."

"I hope Griff will understand her, that 's all. And now that the thing is settled, you 'll not trouble me about it any more. Their woes be on their own head. If they come to blows Lucinda will thrash him, I don't doubt. But while it 's simply a matter of temper and words, she won't find Tewett so easy-going as he looks."

"I believe they 'll do very well together."

"Perhaps they will. There 's no saying who may do well together. You and Carbuncle get on *au marvel.* When is it to be?"

"Of course nothing is settled yet."

"Don't be too hard about settlements, or, maybe, he 'll find a way of wriggling out. When a girl without a shilling asks very much, the world supports a man for breaking his engagement. Let her pretend to be indifferent about it; that will be the way to keep him firm."

"What is his income, George?"

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"I have n't an idea. There never was a closer man about money. I believe he must have the bulk of the Tewett property some day. He can't spend above a couple of thousand now."

"He 's not in debt, is he?"

"He owes me a little money — twelve hundred or so — and I mean to have it. I suppose he is in debt, but not much, I think. He makes stupid bets, and the devil won't break him of it."

"Lucinda has two or three thousand pounds, you know."

"That 's a flea-bite. Let her keep it. You 're in for it now, and you 'd better say nothing about money. He has a decent solicitor, and let him arrange about the settlements. And look here, Jane; get it done as soon as you can."

"You 'll help me?"

"If you don't bother me, I will."

On their way home Mrs. Carbuncle was able to tell Lady Eustace. "You know what has occurred?"

"Oh, dear, yes," said Lizzie laughing.

"Has Lucinda told you?"

"Do you think I 've got no eyes? Of course it was going to be. I knew that from the very moment Sir Griffin reached Portray. I am so glad that Portray has been useful."

"Oh, so useful, dear Lady Eustace! Not but what it must have come off anywhere, for there never was a man so much in love as Sir Griffin. The difficulty has been with Lucinda."

"She likes him, I suppose?"

"Oh, yes, of course," said Mrs. Carbuncle with energy.

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"Not that girls ever really care about men now. They 've got to be married, and they make the best of it. She 's very handsome, and I suppose he 's pretty well off."

"He will be very rich indeed. And they say he 's such an excellent young man when you know him."

"I dare say most young men are excellent when you come to know them. What does Lord George say?"

"He 's in raptures. He is very much attached to Lucinda, you know." And so that affair was managed. They had n't been home a quarter of an hour before Frank Greystock was told. He asked Mrs. Carbuncle about the sport, and then she whispered to him, "An engagement has been made."

"Sir Griffin?" suggested Frank. Mrs. Carbuncle smiled and nodded her head. It was well that everybody should know it.

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CHAPTER XLII.

SUNDAY MORNING.

"So, miss, you 've took him," said the joint Abigail of the Carbuncle establishment that evening to the younger of her two mistresses. Mrs. Carbuncle had resolved that the thing should be quite public.

"Just remember this," replied Lucinda, "I don't want to have a word said to me on the subject."

"Only just to wish you joy, miss."

Lucinda turned round with a flash of anger at the girl. "I don't want your wishing. That 'll do. I can manage by myself. I won't have you come near me if you can't hold your tongue when you 're told."

"I can hold my tongue as well as anybody," said the Abigail with a toss of her head.

This happened after the party had separated for the evening. At dinner Sir Griffin had, of course, given Lucinda his arm; but so he had always done since they had been at Portray. Lucinda hardly opened her mouth at table, and had retreated to bed with a headache when the men, who on that day lingered a few minutes after the ladies, went into the drawing-room. This Sir Griffin felt to be almost an affront, as there was a certain process of farewell for the night which he had anticipated. If she was going to treat him like that, he would cut up rough, and she should know it.

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"Well, Griff, so it 's all settled," said Lord George in the smoking-room. Frank Greystock was there, and Sir Griffin did not like it.

"What do you mean by settled? I don't know that anything is settled."

"I thought it was. Were n't you told so?" And Lord George turned to Greystock.

"I thought I heard a hint," said Frank.

"I 'm —— if I ever knew such people in my life," said Sir Griffin. "They don't seem to have an idea that a man's own affairs may be private."

"Such an affair as that never is private," said Lord George. "The women take care of that. You don't suppose they 're going to run down their game, and let nobody know it."

"If they take me for game ——"

"Of course you 're game. Every man 's game. Only some men are such bad game that they ain't worth following. Take it easy, Griff; you 're caught."

"No, I ain't."

"And enjoy the satisfaction of knowing that she 's about the handsomest girl out. As for me, I 'd sooner have the widow. I beg your pardon, Mr. Greystock." Frank merely bowed. "Simply, I mean, because she rides about two stone lighter. It 'll cost you something to mount Lady Tewett."

"I don't mean that she shall hunt," said Sir Griffin. It will be seen, therefore, that the baronet made no real attempt to deny his engagement.

On the following day, which was Sunday, Sir Griffin, having ascertained that Miss Roanoke did not intend to go to church, stayed at home also. Mr. Emilius had been engaged to preach at the nearest Episcopal place

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of worship, and the remainder of the party all went to hear him. Lizzie was very particular about her Bible and Prayer-book, and Miss Macnulty wore a brighter ribbon on her bonnet than she had ever been known to carry before. Lucinda, when she had heard of the arrangement, had protested to her aunt that she would not go down-stairs till they had all returned; but Mrs. Carbuncle, fearing the anger of Sir Griffin, doubting whether in his anger he might not escape them altogether, said a word or two which even Lucinda found to be rational. "As you have accepted him, you should n't avoid him, my dear. That is only making things worse for the future. And then it 's cowardly, is it not?" No word that could have been spoken was more likely to be efficacious. At any rate, she would not be cowardly.

As soon then as the wheels of the carriage were no longer heard grating upon the road, Lucinda, who had been very careful in her dress, so careful as to avoid all appearance of care, with slow majestic step descended to a drawing-room which they were accustomed to use on mornings. It was probable that Sir Griffin was smoking somewhere about the grounds, but it could not be her duty to go after him out of doors. She would remain there, and, if he chose, he might come to her. There could be no ground of complaint on his side if she allowed herself to be found in one of the ordinary sitting-rooms of the house. In about half an hour he sauntered upon the terrace, and flattened his nose against the window. She bowed and smiled to him, hating herself for smiling. It was perhaps the first time that she had endeavoured to put on a pleasant face wherewithal to greet him. He said nothing then,

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but passed round the house, threw away the end of his cigar, and entered the room. Whatever happened, she would not be a coward. The thing had to be done. Seeing that she had accepted him on the previous day, had not run away in the night or taken poison, and had come down to undergo the interview, she would undergo it at least with courage. What did it matter, even though he should embrace her? It was her lot to undergo misery, and as she had not chosen to take poison, the misery must be endured. She rose as he entered and gave him her hand. She had thought what she would do, and was collected and dignified. He had not, and was very awkward.

"So you have n't gone to church, Sir Griffin, as you ought," she said, with another smile.

"Come, I 've gone as much as you."

"But I had a headache. You stayed away to smoke cigars."

"I stayed to see you, my girl." A lover may call his lady-love his girl, and do so very prettily. He may so use the word that she will like it, and be grateful in her heart for the sweetness of the sound. But Sir Griffin did not do it nicely. "I 've got ever so much to say to you."

"I won't flatter you by saying that I stayed to hear it."

"But you did; did n't you now?" She shook her head; but there was something almost of playfulness in her manner of doing it. "Ah, but I know you did. And why should n't you speak out, now that we are to be man and wife? I like a girl to speak out. I suppose if I want to be with you, you want as much to be with me; eh?"

"I don't see that that follows."

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"By ——, if it does n't I 'll be off."

"You must please yourself about that, Sir Griffin."

"Come; do you love me? You have never said you loved me." Luckily perhaps for her, he thought that the best assurance of love was a kiss. She did not revolt, or attempt to struggle with him; but the hot blood flew over her entire face, and her lips were very cold to his, and she almost trembled in his grasp. Sir Griffin was not a man who could ever have been the adored of many women, but the instincts of his kind were strong enough within him to make him feel that she did not return his embrace with passion. He had found her to be very beautiful; but it seemed to him that she had never been so little beautiful as when thus pressed close to his bosom. "Come," he said, still holding her, "you 'll give me a kiss?"

"I did do it," she said.

"No; nothing like it. Oh, if you won't, you know ——."

On a sudden she made up her mind, and absolutely did kiss him. She would sooner have leaped at the blackest, darkest, dirtiest river in the county. "There," she said, "that will do," gently extricating herself from his arms. "Some girls are different, I know; but you must take me as I am, Sir Griffin; that is, if you do take me."

"Why can't you drop the Sir?"

"Oh yes; I can do that."

"And you do love me?" There was a pause, while she tried to swallow the lie. "Come; I 'm not going to marry any girl who is ashamed to say that she loves me. I like a little flesh and blood. You do love me?"

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"Yes," she said. The lie was told; and for the moment he had to be satisfied. But in his heart he did n't believe her. It was all very well for her to say that she was n't like other girls. Why should n't she be like other girls? It might, no doubt, suit her to be made Lady Tewett; but he would n't make her Lady Tewett if she gave herself airs with him. She should lie on his breast and swear that she loved him beyond all the world, or else she should never be Lady Tewett. Different from other girls indeed! She should know that he was different from other men. Then he asked her to come and take a walk about the grounds. To that she made no objection. She would get her hat and be with him in a minute.

But she was absent more than ten minutes. When she was alone she stood before her glass looking at herself, and then she burst into tears. Never before had she been thus polluted. The embrace had disgusted her. It made her odious to herself. And if this, the beginning of it, was so bad, how was she to drink the cup to the bitter dregs? Other girls, she knew, were fond of their lovers — some so fond of them that all moments of absence were moments, if not of pain, at any rate of regret. To her, as she stood there ready to tear herself because of the vileness of her own condition, it now seemed as though no such love as that were possible to her. For the sake of this man who was to be her husband, she hated all men. Was not everything around her base, and mean, and sordid? She had understood thoroughly the quick divulgings of Mrs. Carbuncle's tidings, the working of her aunt's anxious mind. The man, now that he had been caught, was not to be

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allowed to escape. But how great would be the boon if he would escape. How should she escape? And yet she knew that she meant to go on and bear it all. Perhaps by study and due practice she might become — as were some others — a beast of prey and nothing more. The feeling that had made these few minutes so inexpressibly loathsome to her might, perhaps, be driven from her heart. She washed the tears from her eyes with savage energy, and descended to her lover with a veil fastened closely under her hat. "I hope I have n't kept you waiting," she said.

"Women always do," he replied laughing. "It gives them importance."

"It is not so with me, I can assure you. I will tell you the truth. I was agitated, and I cried."

"Oh, ay; I dare say." He rather liked the idea of having reduced the haughty Lucinda to tears. "But you need n't have been ashamed of my seeing it. As it is, I can see nothing. You must take that off presently."

"Not now, Griffin." Oh, what a name it was! It seemed to blister her tongue as she used it without the usual prefix.

"I never saw you tied up in that way before. You don't do it out hunting. I 've seen you when the snow has been driving in your face, and you did n't mind it — not so much as I did."

"You can't be surprised that I should be agitated now."

"But you 're happy, ain't you?"

"Yes," she said. The lie once told must of course be continued.

"Upon my word, I don't quite understand you,"

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said Sir Griffin. "Look here, Lucinda; if you want to back out of it you can, you know."

"If you ask me again, I will." This was said with the old savage voice, and it at once reduced Sir Griffin to thraldom. To be rejected now would be the death of him. And should there come a quarrel, he was sure that it would seem to be that he had been rejected.

"I suppose it 's all right," he said; "only when a man is only thinking how he can make you happy, he does n't like to find nothing but crying." After this there was but little more said between them before they returned to the castle.

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CHAPTER XLIII.

LIFE AT PORTRAY.

On the Monday Frank took his departure. Everybody at the castle had liked him except Sir Griffin, who, when he had gone, remarked to Lucinda that he was an insufferable legal prig, and one of those chaps who think themselves somebody because they are in Parliament. Lucinda had liked Frank, and said so very boldly. "I see what it is," replied Sir Griffin; "you always like the people I don't."

When he was going, Lizzie left her hand in his for a moment, and gave one look up into his eyes. "When is Lucy to be made blessed?" she asked.

"I don't know that Lucy will ever be made blessed," he replied, "but I am sure I hope she will." Not a word more was said, and he returned to London.

After that Mrs. Carbuncle and Lucinda remained at Portray Castle till after Christmas, greatly overstaying the original time fixed for their visit. Lord George and Sir Griffin went and returned, and went again and returned again. There was much hunting and a great many love passages, which need not be recorded here. More than once during these six or seven weeks there arose a quarrel, bitter, loud, and pronounced, between Sir Griffin and Lucinda; but Lord George and Mrs. Carbuncle between them managed to throw oil upon the waters, and when Christmas came the engagement

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was still an engagement. The absolute suggestion that it should be broken, and abandoned, and thrown to the winds, always came from Lucinda; and Sir Griffin, when he found that Lucinda was in earnest, would again be moved by his old desires, and would determine that he would have the thing he wanted. Once he behaved with such coarse brutality that nothing but an abject apology would serve the turn. He made the abject apology, and after that became conscious that his wings were clipped, and that he must do as he was bidden. Lord George took him away, and brought him back again, and blew him up; and at last, under pressure from Mrs. Carbuncle, made him consent to the fixing of a day. The marriage was to take place during the first week in April. When the party moved from Portray he was to go up to London and see his lawyer. Settlements were to be arranged, and something was to be fixed as to future residence.

In the midst of all this Lucinda was passive as regarded the making of the arrangements, but very troublesome to those around her as to her immediate mode of life. Even to Lady Eustace she was curt and uncivil. To her aunt she was at times ferocious. She told Lord George more than once to his face that he was hurrying her to perdition.

"What the d—— is it you want?" Lord George said to her.

"Not to be married to this man."

"But you have accepted him. I did n't ask you to take him. You don't want to go into a workhouse, I suppose?"

Then she rode so hard that all the Ayrshire lairds were startled out of their propriety, and there was

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a general fear that she would meet some terrible accident. And Lizzie, instigated by jealousy, learned to ride as hard, and as they rode against each other every day, there was a turmoil in the hunt. Morgan, scratching his head, declared that he had known "drunken rampaging men," but had never seen ladies so wicked. Lizzie did come down rather badly at one wall, and Lucinda got herself jammed against a gate-post. But when Christmas was come and gone, and Portray Castle had been left empty, no very bad accident had occurred.

A great friendship had sprung up between Mrs. Carbuncle and Lizzie, so that both had become very communicative. Whether both or either had been candid may, perhaps, be doubted. Mrs. Carbuncle had been quite confidential in discussing with her friend the dangerous varieties of Lucinda's humours, and the dreadful aversion which she still seemed to entertain for Sir Griffin. But then these humours and this aversion were so visible, that they could not well be concealed; and what can be the use of confidential communications if things are kept back which the confidante would see even if they were not told?

"She would be just like that, whoever the man was," said Mrs. Carbuncle.

"I suppose so," said Lizzie, wondering at such a phenomenon in female nature. But with this fact, understood between them to be a fact — namely, that Lucinda would be sure to hate any man whom she might accept — they both agreed that the marriage had better go on.

"She must take a husband some day, you know," said Mrs. Carbuncle.

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"Of course," said Lizzie.

"With her good looks, it would be out of the question that she should n't be married."

"Quite out of the question," repeated Lizzie.

"And I really don't see how she 's to do better. It 's her nature, you know. I have had enough of it, I can tell you. And at the pension, near Paris, they could n't break her in at all. Nobody could ever break her in. You see it in the way she rides."

"I suppose Sir Griffin must do it," said Lizzie, laughing.

"Well — that, or the other thing, you know." But there was no doubt about this — whoever might break or be broken, the marriage must go on. "If you don't persevere with one like her, Lady Eustace, nothing can be done." Lizzie quite concurred. What did it matter to her who should break, or who be broken, if she could only sail her own little bark without dashing it on the rocks? Rocks there were. She did n't quite know what to make of Lord George, who certainly was a Corsair — who had said some very pretty things to her, quite à la Corsair. But in the mean time, from certain rumours that she heard, she believed that Frank had given up, or at least was intending to give up, the little chit who was living with Lady Linlithgow. There had been something of a quarrel — so, at least, she had heard through Miss Macnulty, with whom Lady Linlithgow still occasionally corresponded in spite of their former breaches. From Frank Lizzie heard repeatedly but Frank in his letters never mentioned the name of Lucy Morris. Now, if there should be a division between Frank and Lucy, then, she thought, Frank would return to her. And if so, for a permanent holding rock

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of protection in the world, her cousin Frank would be at any rate safer than the Corsair.

Lizzie and Mrs. Carbuncle had quite come to understand each other comfortably about money. It suited Mrs. Carbuncle very well to remain at Portray. It was no longer necessary that she should carry Lucinda about in search of game to be run down. The one head of game needed had been run down, such as it was — not, indeed, a very noble stag; but the stag had been accepted; and a home for herself and her niece, which should have about it a sufficient air of fashion to satisfy public opinion — out of London — better still, in Scotland, belonging to a person with a title, enjoying the appurtenances of wealth, and one to which Lord George and Sir Griffin could have access — was very desirable. But it was out of the question that Lady Eustace should bear all the expense. Mrs. Carbuncle undertook to find the stables, and did pay for that rick of hay and for the cartload of forage which had made Lizzie's heart quake as she saw it dragged up the hill towards her own granaries. It is very comfortable when all these things are clearly understood. Early in January they were all to go back to London. Then for a while — up to the period of Lucinda's marriage — Lizzie was to be Mrs. Carbuncle's guest at the small house in May Fair, but Lizzie was to keep the carriage. There came at last to be some little attempt, perhaps, at a hard bargain at the hand of each lady, in which Mrs. Carbuncle, as the elder, probably got the advantage. There was a question about the liveries in London. The footman there must appertain to Mrs. Carbuncle, whereas the coachman would as necessarily be one of Lizzie's retainers. Mrs. Carbuncle assented at last to finding the double

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livery — but, like a prudent woman, arranged to get her quid pro quo. "You can add something, you know, to the present you 'll have to give Lucinda. Lucinda shall choose something up to forty pounds."

"We 'll say thirty," said Lizzie, who was beginning to know the value of money.

"Split the difference," said Mrs. Carbuncle, with a pleasant little burst of laughter — and the difference was split. That the very neat and even dandified appearance of the groom who rode out hunting with them should be provided at the expense of Mrs. Carbuncle was quite understood; but it was equally well understood that Lizzie was to provide the horse on which he rode, on every third day. It adds greatly to the comfort of friends living together when these things are accurately settled.

Mr. Emilius remained longer than had been anticipated, and did not go till Lord George and Sir Griffin took their departure. It was observed that he never spoke of his wife; and yet Mrs. Carbuncle was almost sure that she had heard of such a lady. He had made himself very agreeable, and was, either by art or nature, a courteous man, one who paid compliments to ladies. It was true, however, that he sometimes startled his hearers, by things which might have been considered to border on coarseness if they had not been said by a clergyman. Lizzie had an idea that he intended to marry Miss Macnulty. And Miss Macnulty certainly received his attentions with pleasure. In these circumstances his prolonged stay at the castle was not questioned; but when toward the end of November Lord George and Sir Griffin took their departure, he was obliged to return to his flock.

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On the great subject of the diamonds Lizzie had spoken her mind freely to Mrs. Carbuncle early in the days of their friendship — immediately, that is, after the bargaining had been completed. "Ten thousand pounds!" ejaculated Mrs. Carbuncle, opening wide her eyes. Lizzie nodded her head thrice, in token of reiterated assurance. "Do you mean that you really know their value?" The ladies at this time were closeted together, and were discussing many things in the closest confidence.

"They were valued for me by jewellers."

"Ten thousand pounds! And Sir Florian gave them to you?"

"Put them round my neck, and told me they were to be mine, always."

"Generous man!"

"Ah, if you had but known him!" said Lizzie, just touching her eye with her handkerchief.

"I dare say. And now the people claim them. I'm not a bit surprised at that, my dear. I should have thought a man could n't give away so much as that, not just as one makes a present that costs forty or fifty pounds." Mrs. Carbuncle could not resist the opportunity of showing that she did not think so very much of that coming thirty-five-pound "gift" for which the bargain had been made.

"That 's what they say. And they say ever so many other things besides. They mean to prove that it 's an — heirloom."

"Perhaps it is."

"But it is n't. My cousin Frank, who knows more about law than any other man in London, says that they can't make a necklace an heirloom. If it was a brooch

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or a ring, it would be different. I don't quite understand it, but it is so."

"It 's a pity Sir Florian did n't say something about it in his will," suggested Mrs. Carbuncle.

"But he did; at least, not just about the necklace." Then Lady Eustace explained the nature of her late husband's will, as far as it regarded chattels to be found in the castle of Portray at the time of his death; and added the fiction, which had now become common to her, as to the necklace having been given to her in Scotland.

"I should n't let them have it," said Mrs. Carbuncle.

"I don't mean," said Lizzie.

"I should sell them," said Mrs. Carbuncle.

"But why?"

"Because there are so many accidents. A woman should be very rich indeed before she allows herself to walk about with ten thousands pounds upon her shoulders. Suppose somebody broke into the house and stole them. And if they were sold, my dear, so that some got to Paris, and others to St. Petersburg, and others to New York, they 'd have to give it up then." Before the discussion was over Lizzie tripped up-stairs and brought the necklace down and put it on Mrs. Carbuncle's neck. "I should n't like to have such property in my house, my dear," continued Mrs. Carbuncle. "Of course diamonds are very nice. Nothing is so nice. And if a person had a proper place to keep them, and all that ——"

"I 've a very strong iron case," said Lizzie.

"But they should be at the bank, or at the jeweller's, or somewhere quite — quite safe. People might steal the case and all. If I were you I should sell

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them." It was explained to Mrs. Carbuncle on that occasion that Lizzie had brought them down with her in the train from London, and that she intended to take them back in the same way. "There 's nothing the thieves would find easier than to steal them on the way," said Mrs. Carbuncle.

It was some days after this that there came down to her by post some terribly frightful documents, which were the first results, as far as she was concerned, of the filing of a bill in Chancery; which hostile proceeding was, in truth, effected by the unaided energy of Mr. Camperdown, although Mr. Camperdown put himself forward simply as an instrument used by the trustees of the Eustace property. Within eight days she was to enter an appearance, or go through some preliminary ceremony toward showing why she should not surrender her diamonds to the Lord Chancellor, or to one of those satraps of his, the Vice-Chancellors, or to some other terrible myrmidon. Mr. Camperdown in his letter explained that the service of this document upon her in Scotland would amount to nothing, even were he to send it down by a messenger; but that no doubt she would send it to her attorney, who would see the expediency of avoiding exposure by accepting the service. Of all which explanation Lizzie did not understand one word. Messrs. Camperdown's letter and the document which it contained did frighten her considerably, although the matter had been discussed so often that she had accustomed herself to declare that no such bugbear as that should have any influence on her. She had asked Frank whether, in the event of such missiles reaching her, she might send them to him. He had told her that they should be at once

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placed in the hands of her attorney; and consequently she now sent them to Messrs. Mowbray and Mopus, with a very short note from herself. "Lady Eustace presents her compliments to Messrs. Mowbray and Mopus, and encloses some papers she has received about her diamonds. They are her own diamonds, given to her by her late husband. Please do what is proper, but Mr. Camperdown ought to be made to pay all the expenses."

She had, no doubt, allowed herself to hope that no further steps would be taken in the matter; and the very name of the Vice-Chancellor did for a few hours chill the blood at her heart. In those few hours she almost longed to throw the necklace into the sea, feeling sure that, if the diamonds were absolutely lost, there must be altogether an end of the matter. But, by degrees, her courage returned to her, as she remembered that her cousin had told her that, as far as he could see, the necklace was legally her own. Her cousin had, of course, been deceived by the lies which she had repeated to him; but lies which had been efficacious with him might be efficacious with others. Who could prove that Sir Florian had not taken the diamonds to Scotland, and given them to her there, in that very house which was now her own?

She told Mrs. Carbuncle of the missiles which had been hurled at her from the London courts of law, and Mrs. Carbuncle evidently thought that the diamonds were as good as gone. "Then I suppose you can't sell them," said she.

"Yes, I could; I could sell them to-morrow. What is to hinder me? Suppose I took them to jewellers in Paris?"

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"The jewellers would think you had stolen them."

"I didn't steal them," said Lizzie. "They 're my very own. Frank says that nobody can take them away from me. Why should n't a man give his wife a diamond necklace as well as a diamond ring? That 's what I can't understand. What may he give her so that men sha'n't come and worry her life out of her in this way? As for an heirloom, anybody who knows anything, knows it can't be an heirloom. A pot or a pan may be an heirloom; but a diamond necklace cannot be an heirloom. Everybody knows that, that knows anything."

"I dare say it will all come right," said Mrs. Carbuncle, who did not in the least believe Lizzie's law about the pot and pan.

In the first week in January Lord George and Sir Griffin returned to the castle with the view of travelling up to London with the three ladies. This arrangement was partly thrown over by circumstances, as Sir Griffin was pleased to leave Portray two days before the others and to travel by himself. There was a bitter quarrel between Lucinda and her lover, and it was understood afterwards by Lady Eustace that Sir Griffin had had a few words with Lord George; but what those few words were, she never quite knew. There was no open rupture between the two gentlemen, but Sir Griffin showed his displeasure to the ladies, who were more likely to bear patiently his ill-humour in the present circumstances, than was Lord George. When a man has shown himself to be so far amenable to feminine authority as to have put himself in the way of matrimony, ladies will bear a great deal from him. There was nothing which Mrs.

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Carbuncle would not endure from Sir Griffin, just at present; and, on behalf of Mrs. Carbuncle, even Lizzie was long-suffering. It cannot, however, be said that this Petruchio had as yet tamed his own peculiar shrew. Lucinda was as savage as ever, and would snap and snarl, and almost bite. Sir Griffin would snarl too, and say very bearish things. But when it came to the point of actual quarrelling, he would become sullen, and in his sullenness would yield.

"I don't see why Carruthers should have it all his own way," he said, one hunting morning, to Lucinda.

"I don't care twopence who have their way," said Lucinda, "I mean to have mine; that 's all."

"I 'm not speaking about you. I call it downright interference on his part. And I do think you give way to him. You never do anything that I suggest."

"You never suggest anything that I like to do," said Lucinda.

"That 's a pity," said Sir Griffin, "considering that I shall have to suggest so many things that you will have to do."

"I don't know that at all," said Lucinda.

Mrs. Carbuncle came up during the quarrel, meaning to throw oil upon the waters. "What children you are!" she said laughing. "As if each of you won't have to do what the other suggests."

"Mrs. Carbuncle," began Sir Griffin, "if you will have the great kindness not to endeavour to teach me what my conduct should be now or at any future time, I shall take it as a kindness."

"Sir Griffin, pray don't quarrel with Mrs. Carbuncle," said Lizzie.

"Lady Eustace, if Mrs. Carbuncle interferes with me,

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I shall quarrel with her. I have borne a great deal more of this kind of thing than I like. I 'm not going to be told this and told that because Mrs. Carbuncle happens to be the aunt of the future Lady Tewett — if it should come to that. I 'm not going to marry a whole family; and the less I have of this kind of thing the more likely it is that I shall come up to scratch when the time is up."

Then Lucinda rose and spoke. "Sir Griffin Tewett," she said, "there is not the slightest necessity that you should 'come up to scratch.' I wonder that I have not as yet been able to make you understand that if it will suit your convenience to break off our match, it will not in the least interfere with mine. And let me tell you this, Sir Griffin, that any repetition of your unkindness to my aunt will make me utterly refuse to see you again."

"Of course you like her better than you do me."

"A great deal better," said Lucinda.

"If I stand that I 'll be ——," said Sir Griffin, leaving the room. And he left the castle, sleeping that night in the inn at Kilmarnock. The day, however, was passed in hunting; and though he said nothing to either of the three ladies, it was understood by them as they returned to Portray that there was to be no quarrel. Lord George and Sir Griffin had discussed the matter, and Lord George took upon himself to say that there was no quarrel. On the morning but one following, there came a note from Sir Griffin to Lucinda just as they were leaving home for their journey up to London, in which Sir Griffin expressed his regret if he had said anything displeasing to Mrs. Carbuncle.

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CHAPTER XLIV.

A MIDNIGHT ADVENTURE.

SOMETHING as to the jewels had been told to Lord George; and this was quite necessary, as Lord George intended to travel with the ladies from Portray to London. Of course he had heard of the diamonds, as who had not? He had heard too of Lord Fawn, and knew why it was that Lord Fawn had peremptorily refused to carry out his engagement. But, till he was told by Mrs. Carbuncle, he did not know that the diamonds were then kept within the castle, nor did he understand that it would be part of his duty to guard them on their way back to London.

"They are worth ever so much, ain't they?" he said to Mrs. Carbuncle, when she first gave him the information.

"Ten thousand pounds," said Mrs. Carbuncle, almost with awe.

"I don't believe a word of it," said Lord George.

"She says that they've been valued at that, since she's had them."

Lord George owned to himself that such a necklace was worth having, as also, no doubt, were Portray Castle and the income arising from the estate, even though they could be held in possession only for a single life. Hitherto in his very checkered career he had escaped the trammels of matrimony, and among his many modes of life had hardly even suggested to

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himself the expediency of taking a wife with a fortune, and then settling down for the future, if submissively, still comfortably. To say that he had never looked forward to such a marriage as a possible future arrangement, would probably be incorrect. To men such as Lord George it is too easy a result of a career to be altogether banished from the mind. But no attempt had ever yet been made, nor had any special lady ever been so far honoured in his thoughts as to be connected in them with any vague ideas which he might have formed on the subject. But now it did occur to him that Portray Castle was a place in which he could pass two or three months annually without ennui; and that if he were to marry, little Lizzie Eustace would do as well as any other woman with money whom he might chance to meet. He did not say all this to anybody, and therefore cannot be accused of vanity. He was the last man in the world to speak on such a subject to any one. And as even Lizzie certainly bestowed upon him many of her smiles, much of her poetry, and some of her confidence, it cannot be said that he was not justified in his views. But then she was such an— "infernal little liar." Lord George was quite able to discover so much of her.

"She does lie, certainly," said Mrs. Carbuncle, "but then who does n't? "

On the morning of their departure the box with the diamonds was brought down into the hall just as they were about to depart. The tall London footman again brought it down, and deposited it on one of the oak hall-chairs, as though it were a thing so heavy that he could hardly stagger along with it. How Lizzie did hate the man as she watched him, and regret that she

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had not attempted to carry it down herself. She had been with her diamonds that morning, and had had them out of the box and into it. Few days passed on which she did not handle them and gaze at them. Mrs. Carbuncle had suggested that the box, with all her diamonds in it, might be stolen from her, and as she thought of this her heart almost sank within her. When she had them once again in London she would take some steps to relieve herself from this embarrassment of carrying about with her so great a burden of care. The man, with a vehement show of exertion, deposited the box on a chair, and then groaned aloud. Lizzie knew very well that she could lift the box by her own unaided exertions, and the groan was at any rate unnecessary.

"Supposing somebody were to steal that on the way," said Lord George to her, not in his pleasantest tone.

"Do not suggest anything so horrible," said Lizzie, trying to laugh.

"I should n't like it at all," said Lord George.

"I don't think it would make me a bit unhappy. You 've heard about it all. There never was such a persecution. I often say that I should be well pleased to take the bauble and fling it into the ocean waves."

"I should like to be a mermaid and catch it," said Lord George.

"And what better would you be? Such things are all vanity and vexation of spirit. I hate the shining thing." And she hit the box with the whip she held in her hand.

It had been arranged that the party should sleep at Carlisle. It consisted of Lord George, the three ladies,

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the tall man servant, Lord George's own man, and the two maids. Miss Macnulty, with the heir and the nurses, were to remain at Portray for yet a while longer. The iron box was again put into the carriage, and was used by Lizzie as a footstool. This might have been very well, had there been no necessity for changing their train. At Troon the porter behaved well, and did not struggle much as he carried it from the carriage on to the platform. But at Kilmarnock, where they met the train from Glasgow, the big footman interfered again, and the scene was performed under the eyes of a crowd of people. It seemed to Lizzie that Lord George almost encouraged the struggling, as though he were in league with the footman to annoy her. But there was no further change between Kilmarnock and Carlisle, and they managed to make themselves very comfortable. Lunch had been provided; for Mrs. Carbuncle was a woman who cared for such things, and Lord George also liked a glass of champagne in the middle of the day. Lizzie professed to be perfectly indifferent on such matters; but nevertheless she enjoyed her lunch, and allowed Lord George to press upon her a second, and perhaps a portion of a third glass of wine. Even Lucinda was roused up from her general state of apathy, and permitted herself to forget Sir Griffin for a while.

During this journey to Carlisle Lizzie Eustace almost made up her mind that Lord George was the very Corsair she had been expecting ever since she had mastered Lord Byron's great poem. He had a way of doing things and of saying things, of proclaiming himself to be master, and at the same time of making himself thoroughly agreeable to his dependants, and

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especially to the one dependant whom he most honoured at the time, which exactly suited Lizzie's ideas of what a man should be. And then he possessed that utter indifference to all conventions and laws, which is the great prerogative of Corsairs. He had no reverence for aught divine or human, which is a great thing. The Queen and Parliament, the bench of bishops, and even the police, were to him just so many fungi and parasites, and noxious vapours, and false hypocrites. Such were the names by which he ventured to call these bugbears of the world. It was so delightful to live with a man who himself had a title of his own, but who could speak of dukes and marquises as being quite despicable by reason of their absurd position. And as they became gay and free after their luncheon he expressed almost as much contempt for honesty as for dukes, and showed clearly that he regarded matrimony and marquises to be equally vain and useless. "How dare you say such things in our hearing?" exclaimed Mrs. Carbuncle.

"I assert that if men and women were really true, no vows would be needed; and if no vows, then no marriage vows. Do you believe such vows are kept?"

"Yes," said Mrs. Carbuncle enthusiastically.

"I don't," said Lucinda.

"Nor I," said the Corsair. "Who can believe that a woman will always love her husband because she swears she will? The oath is false on the face of it."

"But women must marry," said Lizzie. The Corsair declared freely that he did not see any such necessity.

And then, though it could hardly be said that this Corsair was a handsome man, still he had fine Corsair eyes, full of expression and determination, eyes that

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could look love and bloodshed almost at the same time; and then he had those manly properties — power, bigness, and apparent boldness — which belong to a Corsair. To be hurried about the world by such a man, treated sometimes with crushing severity, and at others with the tenderest love, not to be spoken to for one fortnight, and then to be embraced perpetually for another, to be cast every now and then into some abyss of despair by his rashness, and then raised to a pinnacle of human joy by his courage — that, thought Lizzie, would be the kind of life which would suit her poetical temperament. But then, how would it be with her if the Corsair were to take to hurrying about the world without carrying her with him, and were to do so always at her expense? Perhaps he might hurry about the world and take somebody else with him. Medora, if Lizzie remembered rightly, had had no jointure or private fortune. But yet a woman must risk something if the spirit of poetry is to be allowed any play at all! "And now these weary diamonds again," said Lord George, as the carriage was stopped against the Carlisle platform. "I suppose they must go into your bedroom, Lady Eustace?"

"I wish you 'd let the man put the box in yours, just for this night," said Lizzie.

"No, not if I know it," said Lord George. And then he explained. Such property would be quite as liable to be stolen when in his custody as it would in hers; but if stolen while in his would entail upon him a grievous vexation which would by no means lessen the effect of her loss. She did not understand him, but finding that he was quite in earnest she directed that the box should be again taken to her own chamber.

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Lord George suggested that it should be intrusted to the landlord; and for a moment or two Lizzie submitted to the idea. But she stood for that moment thinking of it, and then decided that the box should go to her own room.

"There 's no knowing what that Mr. Camperdown might n't do," she whispered to Lord George. The porter and the tall footman, between them, staggered along under their load, and the iron box was again deposited in the bedroom of the Carlisle inn.

The evening at Carlisle was spent very pleasantly. The ladies agreed that they would not dress — but of course they did so with more or less of care. Lizzie made herself to look very pretty, though the skirt of the gown in which she came down was that which she had worn during the journey. Pointing this out with much triumph, she accused Mrs. Carbuncle and Lucinda of great treachery, in that they had not adhered to any vestige of their travelling raiment. But the rancour was not vehement, and the evening was passed pleasantly. Lord George was infinitely petted by the three Houris around him, and Lizzie called him a Corsair to his face.

"And you are the Medora," said Mrs. Carbuncle.

"Oh no. That is your place, certainly," said Lizzie.

"What a pity Sir Griffin is n't here," said Mrs. Carbuncle, "that we might call him the Giaour." Lucinda shuddered, without any attempt at concealing her shudder. "That 's all very well, Lucinda, but I think Sir Griffin would make a very good Giaour."

"Pray don't, aunt. Let one forget it all just for a moment."

"I wonder what Sir Griffin would say if he was to hear this," said Lord George.

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Late in the evening Lord George strolled out, and of course all the ladies discussed his character in his absence. Mrs. Carbuncle declared that he was the soul of honour. In regard to her own feeling for him, she averred that no woman had ever had a truer friend. Any other sentiment was of course out of the question, for was she not a married woman? Had it not been for that accident Mrs. Carbuncle really thought that she could have given her heart to Lord George. Lucinda declared that she always regarded him as a kind of supplementary father.

"I suppose he is a year or two older than Sir Griffin," said Lizzie.

"Lady Eustace, why should you make me unhappy?" said Lucinda.

Then Mrs. Carbuncle explained that whereas Sir Griffin was not yet thirty, Lord George was over forty.

"All I can say is, he does n't look it," urged Lady Eustace enthusiastically.

"Those sort of men never do," said Mrs. Carbuncle. Lord George, when he returned, was greeted with an allusion to angels' wings, and would have been a good deal spoiled among them were it in the nature of such an article to receive injury. As soon as the clock had struck ten the ladies all went away to their beds.

Lizzie, when she was in her own room, of course found her maid waiting for her. It was necessarily part of the religion of such a woman as Lizzie Eustace that she could not go to bed, or change her clothes, or get up in the morning, without the assistance of her own young woman. She would

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not like to have it thought that she could stick a pin into her own belongings without such assistance. Nevertheless it was often the case with her that she was anxious to get rid of her girl's attendance. It had been so on this morning and before dinner, and was so now again. She was secret in her movements, and always had some recess in her boxes and bags and dressing apparatuses to which she did not choose that Miss Patience Crabstick should have access. She was careful about her letters, and very careful about her money. And then as to that iron box in which the diamonds were kept! Patience Crabstick had never yet seen the inside of it. Moreover it may be said, either on Lizzie's behalf or to her discredit, as the reader may be pleased to take it, that she was quite able to dress herself, to brush her own hair, to take off her own clothes; and that she was not, either by nature or education, an incapable young woman. But that honour and glory demanded it, she would almost as lief have had no Patience Crabstick to pry into her most private matters. All which Crabstick knew, and would often declare her missus to be "of all missuses the most slyest and least come-at-able." On this present night she was very soon despatched to her own chamber. Lizzie, however, took one careful look at the iron box before the girl was sent away.

Crabstick, on this occasion, had not far to go to seek her own couch. Alongside of Lizzie's larger chamber there was a small room, a dressing-room with a bed in it, which, for this night, was devoted to Crabstick's accommodation. Of course she departed from attendance on her mistress by the door which opened from the one room to the other; but this had no sooner

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been closed than Crabstick descended to complete the amusements of the evening. Lizzie, when she was alone, bolted both the doors on the inside, and then quickly retired to rest. Some short prayer she said, with her knees close to the iron box. Then she put certain articles of property under her pillow, her watch and chain, and the rings from her fingers, and a packet which she had drawn from her travelling-desk, and was soon in bed, thinking that, as she fell away to sleep, she would revolve in her mind that question of the Corsair: would it be good to trust herself and all her belongings to one who might perhaps take her belongings away, but leave herself behind? The subject was not unpleasant, and while she was considering it she fell asleep.

It was, perhaps, about two in the morning when a man, very efficient at the trade which he was then following, knelt outside Lady Eustace's door, and, with a delicately-made saw, aided probably by some other equally well-finished tools, absolutely cut out that portion of the bedroom door on which the bolt was fastened. He must have known the spot exactly, for he did not doubt a moment as he commenced his work; and yet there was nothing on the exterior of the door to show where the bolt was placed. The bit was cut out without the slightest noise, and then, when the door was opened, was placed just inside upon the floor. The man then with perfectly noiseless step entered the room, knelt again — just where poor Lizzie had knelt as she said her prayers — so that he might the more easily raise the iron box without a struggle, and left the room with it in his arms without disturbing the lovely sleeper. He then

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descended the stairs, passed into the coffee-room at the bottom of them, and handed the box through an open window to a man who was crouching on the outside in the dark. He then followed the box, pulled down the window, put on a pair of boots which his friend had ready for him; and the two, after lingering a few moments in the shade of the dark wall, retreated with their prize round a corner. The night itself was almost pitch-dark, and very wet. It was as nearly black with darkness as a night can be. So far, the enterprising adventurers had been successful, and we will now leave them in their chosen retreat, engaged on the longer operation of forcing open the iron safe. For it had been arranged between them that the iron safe should be opened then and there. Though the weight to him who had taken it out of Lizzie's room had not been oppressive, as it had oppressed the tall serving-man, it might still have been an incumbrance to gentlemen intending to travel by railway with as little observation as possible. They were, however, well supplied with tools, and we will leave them at their work.

On the next morning Lizzie was awakened earlier than she had expected, and found not only Patience Crabstick in her bedroom, but also a chambermaid, and the wife of the manager of the hotel. The story was soon told to her. Her room had been broken open, and her treasure was gone. The party had intended to breakfast at their leisure, and proceed to London by a train leaving Carlisle in the middle of the day; but they were soon disturbed from their rest. Lady Eustace had hardly time to get her slippers from her feet, and to wrap herself in her dressing-

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gown, to get rid of her dishevelled nightcap, and make herself just fit for public view, before the manager of the hotel, and Lord George, and the tall footman, and the boots were in her bedroom. It was too plainly manifest to them all that the diamonds were gone. The superintendent of the Carlisle police was there almost as soon as the others; and following him very quickly came the important gentleman who was at the head of the constabulary of the county.

Lizzie, when she first heard the news, was awe-struck rather than outwardly demonstrative of grief. "There has been a regular plot," said Lord George. Captain Fitzmaurice, the gallant chief, nodded his head.

"Plot enough," said the superintendent, who did not mean to confide his thoughts to any man, or to exempt any human being from his suspicion. The manager of the hotel was very angry, and at first did not restrain his anger. Did not everybody know that if articles of value were brought into a hotel they should be handed over to the safe-keeping of the manager? He almost seemed to think that Lizzie had stolen her own box of diamonds.

"My dear fellow," said Lord George, "nobody is saying a word against you or your house."

"No, my lord; but——"

"Lady Eustace is not blaming you, and do not you blame anybody else," said Lord George. "Let the police do what is right."

At last the men retreated, and Lizzie was left with Patience and Mrs. Carbuncle. But even then she did not give way to her grief, but sat upon the bed awe-struck and mute. "Perhaps I had better get dressed," she said at last.

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"I feared how it might be," said Mrs. Carbuncle, holding Lizzie's hand affectionately.

"Yes; you said so."

"The prize was so great."

"I was always a-telling my lady ——" began Crabstick.

"Hold your tongue!" said Lizzie angrily. "I suppose the police will do the best they can, Mrs. Carbuncle?"

"Oh yes; and so will Lord George."

"I think I 'll lie down again for a little while," said Lizzie. "I feel so sick I hardly know what to do. If I were to lie down for a little I should be better." With much difficulty she got them to leave her. Then, before she again undressed herself, she bolted the door that still had a bolt, and turned the lock in the other. Having done this, she took out from under her pillow the little parcel which had been in her desk, and, untying it, perceived that her dear diamond necklace was perfect, and quite safe.

The enterprising adventurers had, indeed, stolen the iron case, but they had stolen nothing else. The reader must not suppose that because Lizzie had preserved her jewels, she was therefore a consenting party to the abstraction of the box. The theft had been a genuine theft, planned with great skill, carried out with much ingenuity, one in the perpetration of which money had been spent, a theft which for a while baffled the police of England, and which was supposed to be very creditable to those who had been engaged in it. But the box, and nothing but the box, had fallen into the hands of the thieves.

Lizzie's silence when the abstraction of the box was

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made known to her, her silence as to the fact that the necklace was at that moment within the grasp of her own fingers, was not at first the effect of deliberate fraud. She was ashamed to tell them that she brought the box empty from Portray, having the diamonds in her own keeping because she had feared that the box might be stolen. And then it occurred to her, quick as thought could flash, that it might be well that Mr. Camperdown should be made to believe that they had been stolen. And so she kept her secret. The reflections of the next half-hour told her how very great would now be her difficulties. But, as she had not disclosed the truth at first, she could hardly disclose it now.

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CHAPTER XLV.

THE JOURNEY TO LONDON.

WHEN we left Lady Eustace alone in her bedroom at the Carlisle hotel after the discovery of the robbery, she had very many cares upon her mind. The necklace was, indeed, safe under her pillow in the bed; but when all the people were around her — her own friends, and the police, and they who were concerned with the inn — she had not told them that it was so, but had allowed them to leave her with the belief that the diamonds had gone with the box. Even at this moment, as she knew well, steps were being taken to discover the thieves, and to make public the circumstances of the robbery. Already, no doubt, the fact that her chamber had been entered in the night, and her jewel-box withdrawn, was known to the London police officers. In such circumstances how could she now tell the truth? But it might be that already had the thieves been taken. In that case would not the truth be known, even though she should not tell it? Then she thought for a while that she would get rid of the diamonds altogether, so that no one should know aught of them. If she could only think of a place fit for such purpose, she would so hide them that no human ingenuity could discover them. Let the thieves say what they might, her word would, in such case, be better than that of the thieves. She would declare that the jewels had been in the box when

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the box was taken. The thieves would swear that the box had been empty. She would appeal to the absence of the diamonds, and the thieves — who would be known as thieves — would be supposed, even by their own friends and associates, to have disposed of the diamonds before they had been taken. There would be a mystery in all this, and a cunning cleverness, the idea of which had in itself a certain charm for Lizzie Eustace. She would have all the world at a loss. Mr. Camperdown could do nothing further to harass her; and would have been, so far, overcome. She would be saved from the feeling of public defeat in the affair of the necklace, which would be very dreadful to her. Lord Fawn might probably be again at her feet. And in all the fuss and rumour which such an affair would make in London, there would be nothing of which she need be ashamed. She liked the idea, and she had grown to be very sick of the necklace.

But what should she do with it? It was, at this moment, between her fingers beneath the pillow. If she were minded, and she thought she was so minded, to get rid of it altogether, the sea would be the place. Could she make up her mind absolutely to destroy so large a property, it would be best for her to have recourse to "her own broad waves," as she called them even to herself. It was within the "friendly depths of her own rock-girt ocean" that she should find a grave for her great trouble. But now her back was to the sea, and she could hardly insist on returning to Portray without exciting a suspicion that might be fatal to her.

And then might it not be possible to get altogether quit of the diamonds and yet to retain the power of future possession? She knew that she was running into

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debt, and that money would, some day, be much needed. Her acquaintance with Mr. Benjamin, the jeweller, was a fact often present to her mind. She might not be able to get ten thousand pounds from Mr. Benjamin; but if she could get eight, or six, or even five, how pleasant would it be! If she could put away the diamonds for three or four years, if she could so hide them that no human eyes could see them till she should again produce them to the light, surely, after so long an interval, they might be made available! But where should be found such hiding-place? She understood well how great was the peril while the necklace was in her own immediate keeping. Any accident might discover it, and if the slightest suspicion were aroused, the police would come upon her with violence and discover it. But surely there must be some such hiding-place, if only she could think of it! Then her mind reverted to all the stories she had ever heard of mysterious villanies. There must be some way of accomplishing this thing, if she could only bring her mind to work upon it exclusively. A hole dug deep into the ground; would not that be the place? But then, where should the hole be dug? In what spot should she trust the earth? If anywhere, it must be at Portray. But now she was going from Portray to London. It seemed to her to be certain that she could dig no hole in London that would be secret to herself. Nor could she trust herself, during the hour or two that remained to her, to find such a hole in Carlisle.

What she wanted was a friend; some one that she could trust. But she had no such friend. She could not dare to give the jewels up to Lord George. So tempted, would not any Corsair appropriate the treas-

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ure? And if, as might be possible, she were mistaken about him and he was no Corsair, then would he betray her to the police. She thought of all her dearest friends, Frank Greystock, Mrs. Carbuncle, Lucinda, Miss Macnulty, even of Patience Crabstick, but there was no friend whom she could trust. Whatever she did she must do alone! She began to fear that the load of thought required would be more than she could bear. One thing, however, was certain to her: she could not now venture to tell them all that the necklace was in her possession, and that the stolen box had been empty.

Thinking of all this, she went to sleep, still holding the packet tight between her fingers, and in this position was awakened at about ten by a knock at the door from her friend Mrs. Carbuncle. Lizzie jumped out of bed, and admitted her friend, admitting also Patience Crabstick. "You had better get up now, dear," said Mrs. Carbuncle. "We are all going to breakfast." Lizzie declared herself to be so fluttered that she must have her breakfast up-stairs. No one was to wait for her. Crabstick would go down and fetch for her a cup of tea, and just a morsel of something to eat.

"You can't be surprised that I should n't be quite myself," said Lizzie.

Mrs. Carbuncle's surprise did not run at all in that direction. Both Mrs. Carbuncle and Lord George had been astonished to find how well she bore her loss. Lord George gave her credit for real bravery. Mrs. Carbuncle suggested, in a whisper, that perhaps she regarded the theft as an easy way out of a lawsuit.

"I suppose you know, George, they would have got

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it from her." Then Lord George whistled, and, in another whisper, declared that, if the little adventure had all been arranged by Lady Eustace herself with the view of getting the better of Mr. Camperdown, his respect for that lady would be very greatly raised.

"If," said Lord George, "it turns out that she has had a couple of bravos in her pay, like an old Italian marquis, I shall think very highly of her indeed." This had occurred before Mrs. Carbuncle came up to Lizzie's room; but neither of them for a moment suspected that the necklace was still within the hotel.

The box had been found, and a portion of the fragments were brought into the room while the party were still at breakfast. Lizzie was not in the room, but the news was at once taken up to her by Crabstick, together with a pheasant's wing and some buttered toast. In a recess beneath an archway running under the railroad, not distant from the hotel above a hundred and fifty yards, the iron box had been found. It had been forced open, so said the sergeant of police, with tools of the finest steel, peculiarly made for such purpose. The sergeant of police was quite sure that the thing had been done by London men who were at the very top of their trade. It was manifest that nothing had been spared. Every motion of the party must have been known to them, and probably one of the adventurers had travelled in the same train with them. And the very doors of the bedroom in the hotel had been measured by the man who had cut out the bolt. The sergeant of police was almost lost in admiration; but the superintendent of police, whom Lord George saw more than once, was discreet and silent. To the superintendent of police it was by no

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means sure that Lord George himself might not be fond of diamonds. Of a suspicion flying so delightfully high as this, he breathed no word to any one; but simply suggested that he should like to retain the companionship of one of the party. If Lady Eustace could dispense with the services of the tall footman, the tall footman might be found useful at Carlisle. It was arranged, therefore, that the tall footman should remain; and the tall footman did remain, though not with his own consent.

The whole party, including Lady Eustace herself and Patience Crabstick, were called upon to give their evidence to the Carlisle magistrates before they could proceed to London. This Lizzie did, having the necklace at that moment locked up in her desk at the inn. The diamonds were supposed to be worth ten thousand pounds. There was to be a lawsuit about them. She did not for a moment doubt that they were her property. She had been very careful about the diamonds because of the lawsuit. Fearing that Mr. Camperdown might wrest them from her possession, she had caused the iron box to be made. She had last seen the diamonds on the evening before her departure from Portray. She had then herself locked them up, and she now produced the key. The lock was still so far uninjured that the key would turn it. That was her evidence. Crabstick, with a good deal of reticence, supported her mistress. She had seen the diamonds, no doubt, but had not seen them often. She had seen them down at Portray, but not for ever so long. Crabstick had very little to say about them; but the clever superintendent was by no means sure that Crabstick did not know more than she said.

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Mrs. Carbuncle and Lord George had also seen the diamonds at Portray. There was no doubt whatever as to the diamonds having been in the iron box; nor was there, said Lord George, any doubt but that this special necklace had acquired so much public notice from the fact of the threatened lawsuit, as might make its circumstances and value known to London thieves. The tall footman was not examined, but was detained by the police under a remand given by the magistrates.

Much information as to what had been done oozed out in spite of the precautions of the discreet superintendent. The wires had been put into operation in every direction, and it had been discovered that one man whom nobody knew had left the down mail train at Annan, and another at Dumfries. These men had taken tickets by the train leaving Carlisle between four and five A.M., and were supposed to have been the two thieves. It had been nearly seven before the theft had been discovered, and by that time not only had the men reached the towns named, but had had time to make their way back again or further on into Scotland. At any rate, for the present, all trace of them was lost. The sergeant of police did not doubt but that one of these men was making his way up to London with the necklace in his pocket. This was told to Lizzie by Lord George; and though she was awe-struck by the danger of her situation, she nevertheless did feel some satisfaction in remembering that she and she only held the key of the mystery. And then as to those poor thieves! What must have been their consternation when they found, after all the labour and perils of the night, that the box contained no diamonds — that the treasure was not there, and that they were never-

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theless bound to save themselves by flight and stratagem from the hands of the police! Lizzie, as she thought of this, almost pitied the poor thieves. What a consternation there would be among the Camperdowns and Garnetts, among the Mopuses and Benjamins, when the news was heard in London. Lizzie almost enjoyed it. As her mind went on making fresh schemes on the subject, a morbid desire of increasing the mystery took possession of her. She was quite sure that nobody knew her secret, and that nobody as yet could even guess it. There was great danger, but there might be delight and even profit if she could safely dispose of the jewels before suspicion against herself should be aroused. She could understand that a rumour should get to the police that the box had been empty, even if the thieves were not taken; but such rumour would avail nothing if she could only dispose of the diamonds. As she first thought of all this, the only plan hitherto suggested to herself would require her immediate return to Portray. If she were at Portray she could find a spot in which she could bury the necklace. But she was obliged to allow herself now to be hurried up to London. When she got into the train the little parcel was in her desk, and the key of her desk was fastened round her neck.

They had secured a department for themselves from Carlisle to London, and of course filled four seats. "As I am alive," said Lord George as soon as the train had left the station, "that head policeman thinks that I am the thief." Mrs. Carbuncle laughed. Lizzie protested that this was absurd. Lucinda declared that such a suspicion would be vastly amusing. "It's a

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fact," continued Lord George. "I can see it in the fellow's eye, and I feel it to be a compliment. They are so very 'cute that they delight in suspicions. I remember when the altar-plate was stolen from Barchester cathedral some years ago, a splendid idea occurred to one of the police that the bishop had taken it."

"Really?" asked Lizzie.

"Oh, yes — really. I don't doubt but that there is already a belief in some of their minds that you have stolen your own diamonds for the sake of getting the better of Mr. Camperdown."

"But what could I do with them if I had?" asked Lizzie.

"Sell them, of course. There is always a market for such goods."

"But who would buy them?"

"If you have been so clever, Lady Eustace, I 'll find a purchaser for them. One would have to go a good distance to do it — and there would be some expense. But the thing could be done. Vienna, I should think, would be about the place."

"Very well, then," said Lizzie. "You won't be surprised if I ask you to take the journey for me." Then they all laughed, and were very much amused. It was quite agreed among them that Lizzie bore her loss very well.

"I should n't care the least for losing them," said Lizzie, "only that Florian gave them to me. They have been such a vexation to me that to be without them will be a comfort." Her desk had been brought into the carriage, and was now used as a foot-stool in place of the box which was gone.

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They arrived at Mrs. Carbuncle's house in Hertford street quite late, between ten and eleven; but a note had been sent from Lizzie to her cousin Frank's address from the Euston Square station by a commissionnaire. Indeed, two notes were sent — one to the House of Commons, and the other to the Grosvenor Hotel. "My necklace has been stolen. Come to me early to-morrow at Mrs. Carbuncle's house, No. — Hertford street." And he did come, before Lizzie was up. Crabstick brought her mistress word that Mr. Greystock was in the parlour soon after nine o'clock. Lizzie again hurried on her clothes so that she might see her cousin, taking care as she did, so that though her toilet might betray haste, it should not be other than charming. And as she dressed she endeavoured to come to some conclusion. Would it not be best for her that she should tell everything to her cousin, and throw herself upon his mercy, trusting to his ingenuity to extricate her from her difficulties? She had been thinking of her position almost through the entire night, and had remembered that at Carlisle she had committed perjury. She had sworn that the diamonds had been left by her in the box. And should they be found with her, it might be that they would put her in jail for stealing them. Little mercy could she expect from Mr. Camperdown should she fall into that gentleman's hands! But Frank, if she would even yet tell him everything honestly, might probably save her.

"What is this about the diamonds?" he asked as soon as he saw her. She had flown almost into his arms as though carried there by the excitement of the moment. "You don't really mean that they have been stolen?"

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"I do, Frank."

"On the journey?"

"Yes, Frank — at the inn at Carlisle."

"Box and all?" Then she told him the whole story — not the true story, but the story as it was believed by all the world. She found it to be impossible to tell him the true story. "And the box was broken open, and left in the street?"

"Under an archway," said Lizzie.

"And what do the police think?"

"I don't know what they think. Lord George says that they believe he is the thief."

"He knew of them," said Frank, as though he imagined that the suggestion was not altogether absurd.

"Oh, yes — he knew of them."

"And what is to be done?"

"I don't know. I've sent for you to tell me." Then Frank averred that information should be immediately given to Mr. Camperdown. He would himself call on Mr. Camperdown, and would also see the head of the London police. He did not doubt but that all the circumstances were already known in London at the police office; but it might be well that he should see the officer. He was acquainted with the gentleman, and might perhaps learn something. Lizzie at once acceded, and Frank went direct to Mr. Camperdown's offices.

"If I had lost ten thousand pounds in that way," said Mrs. Carbuncle, "I think I should have broken my heart." Lizzie felt that her heart was bursting rather than being broken, because the ten thousand pounds' worth of diamonds was not really lost.

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CHAPTER XLVI.

LUCY MORRIS IN BROOK STREET.

LUCY MORRIS went to Lady Linlithgow early in October, and was still with Lady Linlithgow when Lizzie Eustace returned to London in January. During these three months she certainly had not been happy. In the first place, she had not once seen her lover. This had aroused no anger or suspicion in her bosom against him, because the old countess had told her that she would have no lover come to the house, and that, above all, she would not allow a young man with whom she herself was connected to come in that guise to her companion. "From all I hear," said Lady Linlithgow, "it 's not at all likely to be a match; and at any rate it can't go on here." Lucy thought that she would be doing no more than standing up properly for her lover by asserting her conviction that it would be a match; and she did assert it bravely; but she made no petition for his presence, and bore that trouble bravely. In the next place, Frank was not a satisfactory correspondent. He did write to her occasionally; and he wrote also to the old countess immediately on his return to town from Bobsborough a letter which was intended as an answer to that which she had written to Mrs. Greystock. What was said in that letter Lucy never knew; but she did know that Frank's few letters to herself were not full and hearty — were not such

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thorough-going love-letters as lovers write to each other when they feel unlimited satisfaction in the work. She excused him, telling herself that he was overworked, that with his double trade of legislator and lawyer he could hardly be expected to write letters, that men, in respect of letter-writing, are not as women are, and the like; but still there grew at her heart a little weed of care, which from week to week spread its noxious, heavy-scented leaves, and robbed her of her joyousness. To be loved by her lover, and to feel that she was his, to have a lover of her own to whom she could thoroughly devote herself, to be conscious that she was one of those happy women in the world who find a mate worthy of worship as well as love — this to her was so great a joy that even the sadness of her present position could not utterly depress her. From day to day she assured herself that she did not doubt and would not doubt — that there was no cause for doubt; that she would herself be base were she to admit any shadow of suspicion. But yet his absence, and the shortness of those little notes, which came perhaps once a fortnight, did tell upon her in opposition to her own convictions. Each note as it came was answered — instantly; but she would not write except when the notes came. She would not seem to reproach him by writing oftener than he wrote. When he had given her so much, and she had nothing but her confidence to give in return, would she stint him in that? There can be no love, she said, without confidence, and it was the pride of her heart to love him.

The circumstances of her present life were desperately weary to her. She could hardly understand why it was that Lady Linlithgow should desire her presence.

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She was required to do nothing. She had no duties to perform, and, as it seemed to her, was of no use to any one. The countess would not even allow her to be of ordinary service in the house. Lady Linlithgow, as she had said of herself, poked her own fires, carved her own meat, lit her own candles, opened and shut the doors for herself, wrote her own letters, and did not even like to have books read to her. She simply chose to have some one sitting with her to whom she could speak and make little cross-gained, sarcastic, and ill-natured remarks. There was no company at the house in Brook street, and when the countess herself went out, she went out alone. Even when she had a cab to go shopping, or to make calls, she rarely asked Lucy to go with her; and was benevolent chiefly in this — that if Lucy chose to walk round the square or as far as the park, her ladyship's maid was allowed to accompany her for protection. Poor Lucy often told herself that such a life would be unbearable, were it not for the supreme satisfaction she had in remembering her lover. And then the arrangement had been made only for six months. She did not feel quite assured of her fate at the end of those six months, but she believed that there would come to her a residence in a sort of outer garden to that sweet Elysium in which she was to pass her life. The Elysium would be Frank's house; and the outer garden was the deanery at Bobsborough.

Twice during the three months Lady Fawn, with two of the girls, came to call upon her. On the first occasion she was unluckily out, taking advantage of the protection of her ladyship's maid in getting a little air. Lady Linlithgow had also been away, and Lady Fawn had seen no one. Afterwards, both Lucy and

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her ladyship were found at home, and Lady Fawn was full of graciousness and affection. "I dare say you 've got something to say to each other," said Lady Linlithgow, "and I 'll go away."

"Pray don't let us disturb you," said Lady Fawn.

"You 'd only abuse me if I did n't," said Lady Linlithgow.

As soon as she was gone Lucy rushed into her friend's arms. "It is so nice to see you again!"

"Yes, my dear, is n't it? I did come before, you know."

"You have been so good to me! To see you again is like the violets and primroses." She was crouching close to Lady Fawn, with her hand in that of her friend Lydia. "I have n't a word to say against Lady Linlithgow, but it is like winter here, after dear Richmond."

"Well, we think we 're prettier at Richmond," said Lady Fawn.

"There were such hundreds of things to do there," said Lucy. "After all, what a comfort it is to have things to do."

"Why did you come away?" said Lydia.

"Oh, I was obliged. You must n't scold me now that you have come to see me."

There were a hundred things to be said about Fawn Court and the children, and a hundred more things about Lady Linlithgow and Bruton street. Then, at last, Lady Fawn asked the one important question. "And now, my dear, what about Mr. Greystock?"

"Oh, I don't know; nothing particular, Lady Fawn. It 's just as it was, and I am — quite satisfied."

"You see him sometimes?"

"No, never. I have not seen him since the last time

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he came down to Richmond. Lady Linlithgow does n't allow — followers." There was a pleasant little spark of laughter in Lucy's eye as she said this, which would have told to any bystander the whole story of the affection which existed between her and Lady Fawn.

"That 's very ill-natured," said Lydia.

"And he 's a sort of a cousin, too," said Lady Fawn.

"That 's just the reason why," said Lucy, explaining. "Of course Lady Linlithgow thinks that her sister's nephew can do better than marry her companion. It 's a matter of course she should think so. What I am most afraid of is that the dean and Mrs. Greystock should think so too."

No doubt the dean and Mrs. Greystock would think so. Lady Fawn was very sure of that. Lady Fawn was one of the best women breathing, unselfish, motherly, affectionate, appreciative, and never happy unless she was doing good to somebody. It was her nature to be soft, and kind, and beneficent. But she knew very well that if she had had a son, a second son, situated as was Frank Greystock, she would not wish him to marry a girl without a penny, who was forced to earn her bread by being a governess. The sacrifice on Mr. Greystock's part would, in her estimation, be so great, that she did not believe that it would be made. Womanlike, she regarded the man as being so much more important than the woman that she could not think that Frank Greystock would devote himself simply to such a one as Lucy Morris. Had Lady Fawn been asked which was the better creature of the two, her late governess or the rising barrister who had declared himself to be that governess's lover, she would have said that no man could be better than

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Lucy. She knew Lucy's worth and goodness so well that she was ready herself to do any act of friendship on behalf of one so sweet and excellent. For herself and her girls Lucy was a companion and friend in every way satisfactory. But was it probable that a man of the world, such as was Frank Greystock, a rising man, a member of Parliament, one who, as everybody knew, was especially in want of money — was it probable that such a man as this would make her his wife just because she was good, and worthy, and sweet-natured? No doubt the man had said that he would do so, and Lady Fawn's fears betrayed on her ladyship's part a very bad opinion of men in general. It may seem to be a paradox to assert that such bad opinion sprung from the high idea which she entertained of the importance of men in general; but it was so. She had but one son, and of all her children he was the least worthy; but he was more important to her than all her daughters. Between her own girls and Lucy she hardly made any difference; but when her son had chosen to quarrel with Lucy, it had been necessary to send Lucy to eat her meals up-stairs. She could not believe that Mr. Greystock should think so much of such a little girl as to marry her. Mr. Greystock would no doubt behave very badly in not doing so; but then men do so often behave very badly! And at the bottom of her heart she almost thought that they might be excused for doing so. According to her view of things, a man out in the world had so many things to think of, and was so very important, that he could hardly be expected to act at all times with truth and sincerity.

Lucy had suggested that the dean and Mrs. Greystock would dislike the marriage, and upon that hint

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Lady Fawn spoke. "Nothing is settled, I suppose, as to where you are to go when the six months are over?"

"Nothing as yet, Lady Fawn."

"They have n't asked you to go to Bobsborough?"

Lucy would have given the world not to blush as she answered, but she did blush. "Nothing is fixed, Lady Fawn."

"Something should be fixed, Lucy. It should be settled by this time, should n't it, dear? What will you do without a home, if at the end of the six months Lady Linlithgow should say that she does n't want you any more?"

Lucy certainly did not look forward to a condition in which Lady Linlithgow should be the arbitress of her destiny. The idea of staying with the countess was almost as bad to her as that of finding herself altogether homeless. She was still blushing, feeling herself to be hot and embarrassed. But Lady Fawn sat waiting for an answer. To Lucy there was only one answer possible. "I will ask Mr. Greystock what I am to do." Lady Fawn shook her head. "You don't believe in Mr. Greystock, Lady Fawn; but I do."

"My darling girl," said her ladyship, making the special speech for the sake of making which she had travelled up from Richmond, "it is not exactly a question of belief, but one of common prudence. No girl should allow herself to depend on a man before she is married to him. By doing so she will be apt to lose even his respect."

"I did n't mean for money," said Lucy, hotter than ever, with her eyes full of tears.

"She should not be in any respect at his disposal

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till he has bound himself to her at the altar. You may believe me, Lucy, when I tell you so. It is only because I love you so that I say so."

"I know that, Lady Fawn."

"When your time here is over, just put up your things and come back to Richmond. You need fear nothing with us. Frederic quite liked your way of parting with him at last, and all that little affair is forgotten. At Fawn Court you'll be safe; and you shall be happy, too, if we can make you happy. It's the proper place for you."

"Of course you'll come," said Diana Fawn.

"You'll be the worst little thing in the world if you don't," said Lydia. "We don't know what to do without you. Do we, mamma?

"Lucy will please us all by coming back to her old home," said Lady Fawn. The tears were now streaming down Lucy's face, so that she was hardly able to say a word in answer to all this kindness. And she did not know what word to say. Were she to accept the offer made to her, and acknowledge that she could do nothing better than creep back under her old friend's wing, would she not thereby be showing that she doubted her lover? But she could not go to the dean's house unless the dean and his wife were pleased to take her; and, suspecting as she did that they would not be pleased, would it become her to throw upon her lover the burden of finding for her a home with people who did not want her? Had she been welcome at Bobsborough, Mrs. Greystock would surely have so told her before this. "You need n't say a word, my dear," said Lady Fawn. "You'll come, and there 's an end of it."

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"But you don't want me any more," said Lucy from amid her sobs.

"That 's just all that you know about it," said Lydia. "We do want you — more than anything."

"I wonder whether I may come in now," said Lady Linlithgow, entering the room. As it was the countess's own drawing-room, as it was now mid-winter, and as the fire in the dining-room had been allowed, as was usual, to sink almost to two hot coals, the request was not unreasonable. Lady Fawn was profuse in her thanks, and immediately began to account for Lucy's tears, pleading their dear friendship and their long absence, and poor Lucy's emotional state of mind. Then she took her leave, and Lucy, as soon as she had been kissed by her friends outside the drawing-room door, took herself to her bedroom and finished her tears in the cold.

"Have you heard the news?" said Lady Linlithgow to her companion about a month after this. Lady Linlithgow had been out, and asked the question immediately on her return. Lucy, of course, had heard no news. "Lizzie Eustace has just come back to London, and has had all her jewels stolen on the road."

"The diamonds?" asked Lucy with amaze.

"Yes, the Eustace diamonds! And they did n't belong to her any more than they did to you. They 've been taken any way, and from what I hear I should n't be at all surprised if she had arranged the whole matter herself."

"Arranged that they should be stolen?"

"Just that, my dear. It would be the very thing for Lizzie Eustace to do. She 's clever enough for anything."

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"But, Lady Linlithgow ——"

"I know all about that. Of course it would be very wicked, and if it were found out she'd be put in the dock and tried for her life. It is just what I expect she'll come to some of these days. She has gone and got up a friendship with some disreputable people, and was travelling with them. There was a man who calls himself Lord George de Bruce Carruthers. I know him, and can remember when he was errand boy to a disreputable lawyer at Aberdeen." This assertion was a falsehood on the part of the countess. Lord George had never been an errand boy, and the Aberdeen lawyer — as provincial Scotch lawyers go — had been by no means disreputable. "I'm told that the police think that he has got them."

"How very dreadful!"

"Yes; it's dreadful enough. At any rate, men got into Lizzie's room at night and took away the iron box and diamonds and all. It may be she was asleep at the time; but she's one of those who pretty nearly always sleep with one eye open."

"She can't be so bad as that, Lady Linlithgow."

"Perhaps not. We shall see. They had just begun a lawsuit about the diamonds, to get them back. And then all at once they're stolen. It looks what the men call — fishy. I'm told that all the police in London are up about it."

On the very next day who should come to Brook street but Lizzie Eustace herself. She and her aunt had quarrelled, and they hated each other; but the old woman had called upon Lizzie, advising her, as the reader will perhaps remember, to give up the diamonds, and now Lizzie returned the visit. "So you're

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here, installed in poor Macnulty's place," began Lizzie to her old friend, the countess at the moment being out of the room.

"I am staying with your aunt for a few months as her companion. Is it true, Lizzie, that all your diamonds have been stolen?" Lizzie gave an account of the robbery, true in every respect except in regard to the contents of the box. Poor Lizzie had been wronged in that matter by the countess, for the robbery had been quite genuine. The man had opened her room and taken her box, and she had slept through it all. And then the broken box had been found, and was in the hands of the police, and was evidence of the fact.

"People seem to think it possible," said Lizzie, "that Mr. Camperdown the lawyer arranged it all." As this suggestion was being made, Lady Linlithgow came in, and then Lizzie repeated the whole story of the robbery. Though the aunt and niece were open and declared enemies, the present circumstances were so peculiar and full of interest, that conversation for a time almost amicable took place between them. "As the diamonds were so valuable, I thought it right, Aunt Susanna, to come and tell you myself."

"It 's very good of you, but I 'd heard it already. I was telling Miss Morris yesterday what very odd things there are being said about it."

"Were n't you very much frightened?" asked Lucy.

"You see, my child, I knew nothing about it till it was all over. The man cut the bit out of the door in the most beautiful way, without my ever hearing the least sound of the saw."

"And you that sleep so light," said the countess.

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"They say that perhaps something was put into the wine at dinner to make me sleep."

"Ah!" ejaculated the countess, who did not for a moment give up her own erroneous suspicion; "very likely."

"And they do say these people can do things without making the slightest tittle of noise. At any rate the box was gone."

"And the diamonds?" asked Lucy.

"Oh yes, of course. And now there is such a fuss about it! The police keep on coming to me almost every day."

"And what do the police think?" asked Lady Linlithgow. "I am told that they have their suspicions."

"No doubt they have their suspicions," said Lizzie.

"You travelled up with friends, I suppose."

"Oh yes, with Lord George de Bruce Carruthers; and with Mrs. Carbuncle, who is my particular friend, and with Lucinda Roanoke, who is just going to be married to Sir Griffin Tewett. We were quite a large party."

"And Macnulty?"

"No. I left Miss Macnulty at Portray with my darling. They thought he had better remain a little longer in Scotland."

"Ah, yes; perhaps Lord George de Bruce Carruthers does not care for babies. I can easily believe that. I wish Macnulty had been with you."

"Why do you wish that?" said Lizzie, who already was beginning to feel that the countess intended, as usual, to make herself disagreeable.

"She 's a stupid, dull, pig-headed creature; but one can believe what she says."

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"And don't you believe what I say?" demanded Lizzie.

"It 's all true, no doubt, that the diamonds are gone."

"Indeed it is."

"But I don't know much about Lord George de Bruce Carruthers."

"He 's the brother of a marquis, anyway," said Lizzie, who thought that she might thus best answer the mother of a Scotch earl.

"I remember when he was plain George Carruthers, running about the streets of Aberdeen, and it was well with him when his shoes were n't broken at the toes and down at heel. He earned his bread then, such as it was. Nobody knows how he gets it now. Why does he call himself de Bruce, I wonder?"

"Because his godfathers and godmothers gave him that name when he was made a child of Christ, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven," said Lizzie, ever so pertly.

"I don't believe a bit of it."

"I was n't there to see, Aunt Susanna; and therefore I can't swear to it. That 's his name in all the peerages, and I suppose they ought to know."

"And what does Lord George de Bruce say about the diamonds?"

Now it had come to pass that Lady Eustace herself did not feel altogether sure that Lord George had not had a hand in this robbery. It would have been a trick worthy of a genuine Corsair, to arrange and carry out such a scheme for the appropriation of so rich a spoil. A watch or a brooch would, of course, be beneath the notice of a good genuine Corsair — of a

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Corsair who was written down in the peerage as a marquis's brother; but diamonds worth ten thousand pounds are not to be had every day. A Corsair must live, and if not by plunder rich as that, how then? If Lord George had concocted this little scheme, he would naturally be ignorant of the true event of the robbery till he should meet the humble executors of his design, and would, as Lizzie thought, have remained unaware of the truth till his arrival in London. That he had been ignorant of the truth during the journey was evident to her. But they had now been three days in London, during which she had seen him once. At that interview he had been sullen and almost cross, and had said next to nothing about the robbery. He made but one remark about it. "I have told the chief man here," he said, "that I shall be ready to give any evidence in my power when called upon. Till then I shall take no further steps in the matter. I have been asked questions that should not have been asked." In saying this he had used a tone which prevented further conversation on the subject, but Lizzie, as she thought of it all, remembered his jocular remark, made in the railway carriage, as to the suspicion which had already been expressed on the matter in regard to himself. If he had been the perpetrator, and had then found that he had only stolen the box, how wonderful would be the mystery!

"He has n't got anything to say," replied Lizzie to the question of the countess.

"And who is your Mrs. Carbuncle?" asked the old woman.

"A particular friend of mine with whom I am staying at present. You don't go about a great deal,

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Aunt Linlithgow, but surely you must have met Mrs. Carbuncle."

"I 'm an ignorant old woman, no doubt. My dear, I 'm not at all surprised at your losing your diamonds. The pity is that they were n't your own."

"They were my own."

"The loss will fall on you, no doubt, because the Eustace people will make you pay for them. You 'll have to give up half your jointure for your life. That 's what it will come to. To think of your travelling about with those things in a box!"

"They were my own, and I had a right to do what I liked with them. Nobody accuses you of taking them."

"That 's quite true. Nobody will accuse me. I suppose Lord George has left England for the benefit of his health. It would not at all surprise me if I were to hear that Mrs. Carbuncle had followed him; not in the least."

"You 're just like yourself, Aunt Susanna," said Lizzie, getting up and taking her leave. "Good-by, Lucy. I hope you 're happy and comfortable here. Do you ever see a certain friend of ours now?"

"If you mean Mr. Greystock, I have n't seen him since I left Fawn Court," said Lucy, with dignity.

When Lizzie was gone Lady Linlithgow spoke her mind freely about her niece. "Lizzie Eustace won't come to any good. When I heard that she was engaged to that prig, Lord Fawn, I had some hopes that she might be kept out of harm. That 's all over, of course. When he heard about the necklace he was n't going to put his neck into that scrape. But now she 's getting among such a set that nothing can save her.

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She has taken to hunting, and rides about the country like a mad woman."

"A great many ladies hunt," said Lucy.

"And she 's got hold of this Lord George, and of that horrid American woman that nobody knows anything about. They 've got the diamonds between them, I don't doubt. I 'll bet you sixpence that the police find out all about it, and that there is some terrible scandal. The diamonds were no more hers than they were mine, and she 'll be made to pay for them."

The necklace, the meanwhile, was still locked up in Lizzie's desk — with a patent Bramah key — in Mrs. Carbuncle's house, and was a terrible trouble to our unhappy friend.

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CHAPTER XLVII.

MATCHING PRIORY.

BEFORE the end of January everybody in London had heard of the great robbery at Carlisle; and most people had heard also that there was something very peculiar in the matter—something more than a robbery. Various rumours were afloat. It had become widely known that the diamonds were to be the subject of litigation between the young widow and the trustees of the Eustace estate; and it was known also that Lord Fawn had engaged himself to marry the widow, and had then retreated from his engagement simply on account of this litigation. There were strong parties formed in the matter; whom we may call Lizzieites and Antilizzieites. The Lizzieites were of opinion that poor Lady Eustace was being very ill-treated — that the diamonds did probably belong to her, and that Lord Fawn, at any rate, clearly ought to be her own. It was worthy of remark that these Lizzieites were all of them Conservatives. Frank Greystock had probably set the party on foot; and it was natural that political opponents should believe that a noble young Under-Secretary of State on the liberal side — such as Lord Fawn — had misbehaved himself. When the matter at last became of such importance as to demand leading articles in the newspapers, those journals which had devoted themselves to upholding the conservative politicians of the

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day were very heavy indeed upon Lord Fawn. The whole force of the Government, however, was Antilizzieite; and as the controversy advanced every good Liberal became aware that there was nothing so wicked, so rapacious, so bold, or so cunning but that Lady Eustace might have done it, or caused it to be done, without delay, without difficulty, and without scruple. Lady Glencora Palliser for a while endeavoured to defend Lizzie in liberal circles — from generosity rather than from any real belief, and instigated, perhaps, by a feeling that any woman in society who was capable of doing anything extraordinary ought to be defended. But even Lady Glencora was forced to abandon her generosity, and to confess, on behalf of her party, that Lizzie Eustace was — a very wicked young woman indeed. All this, no doubt, grew out of the diamonds, and chiefly arose from the robbery; but there had been enough of notoriety attached to Lizzie before the affair at Carlisle to make people fancy that they had understood her character long before that.

The party assembled at Matching Priory, a country house belonging to Mr. Palliser, in which Lady Glencora took much delight, was not large, because Mr. Palliser's uncle, the Duke of Omnium, who was with them, was now a very old man, and one who did not like very large gatherings of people. Lord and Lady Chiltern were there — that Lord Chiltern who had been known so long and so well in the hunting counties of England, and that Lady Chiltern who had been so popular in London as the beautiful Violet Effingham; and Mr. and Mrs. Grey were there, very particular friends of Mr. Palliser's. Mr. Grey was now sitting for the borough of Silverbridge, in which the

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Duke of Omnium was still presumed to have a controlling influence, in spite of all Reform bills, and Mrs. Grey was in some distant way connected with Lady Glencora. And Madame Max Goesler was there — a lady whose society was still much affected by the old duke; and Mr. and Mrs. Bonteen — who had been brought there, not perhaps altogether because they were greatly loved, but in order that the gentleman's services might be made available by Mr. Palliser in reference to some great reform about to be introduced in monetary matters. Mr. Palliser, who was now Chancellor of the Exchequer, was intending to alter the value of the penny. Unless the work should be too much for him, and he should die before he had accomplished the self-imposed task, the future penny was to be made, under his auspices, to contain five farthings, and the shilling ten pennies. It was thought that if this could be accomplished, the arithmetic of the whole world would be so simplified that henceforward the name of Palliser would be blessed by all schoolboys, clerks, shopkeepers, and financiers. But the difficulties were so great that Mr. Palliser's hair was already gray from toil, and his shoulders bent by the burden imposed upon them. Mr. Bonteen, with two private secretaries from the Treasury, was now at Matching to assist Mr. Palliser; and it was thought that both Mr. and Mrs. Bonteen were near to madness under the pressure of the five-farthing penny. Mr. Bonteen had remarked to many of his political friends that those two extra farthings that could not be made to go into the shilling would put him into his cold grave before the world would know what he had done — or had rewarded him for it with a handle to his name, and

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a pension. Lord Fawn was also at Matching — a suggestion having been made to Lady Glencora by some leading Liberals that he should be supported in his difficulties by her hospitality.

The mind of Mr. Palliser himself was too deeply engaged to admit of its being interested in the great necklace affair; but, of all the others assembled, there was not one who did not listen anxiously for news on the subject. As regarded the old duke, it had been found to be quite a godsend; and from post to post as the facts reached Matching they were communicated to him. And, indeed, there were some there who would not wait for the post, but had the news about poor Lizzie's diamonds down by the wires. The matter was of the greatest moment to Lord Fawn, and Lady Glencora was perhaps justified, on his behalf, in demanding a preference for her affairs over the messages which were continually passing between Matching and the Treasury respecting those two ill-conditioned farthings.

"Duke," she said, entering rather abruptly the small, warm, luxurious room in which her husband's uncle was passing the morning — "Duke, they say now that after all the diamonds were not in the box when it was taken out of the room at Carlisle." The duke was reclining in an easy-chair, with his head leaning forward on his breast, and Madame Goesler was reading to him. It was now three o'clock, and the old man had been brought down to this room after his breakfast. Madame Goesler was reading the last famous new novel, and the duke was dozing. That, probably, was the fault neither of the reader nor of the novelist, as the duke was wont to doze in these days. But Lady Glencora's tidings awakened him completely. She had the telegram in

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her hand — so that he could perceive that the very latest news was brought to him.

"The diamonds not in the box!" he said — pushing his head a little more forward in his eagerness, and sitting with the extended fingers of his two hands touching each other.

"Barrington Erle says that Major Mackintosh is almost sure the diamonds were not there." Major Mackintosh was an officer very high in the police force, whom everybody trusted implicitly, and as to whom the outward world believed that he could discover the perpetrators of any iniquity, if he would only take the trouble to look into it. Such was the pressing nature of his duties that he found himself compelled in one way or another to give up about sixteen hours a day to them; but the outer world accused him of idleness. There was nothing he could n't find out — only he would not give himself the trouble to find out all the things that happened. Two or three newspapers had already been very hard upon him in regard to the Eustace diamonds. Such a mystery as that, they said, he ought to have unravelled long ago. That he had not unravelled it yet was quite certain.

"The diamonds not in the box!" said the duke.

"Then she must have known it," said Madame Goesler.

"That does n't quite follow, Madame Max," said Lady Glencora.

"But why should n't the diamonds have been in the box?" asked the duke. As this was the first intimation given to Lady Glencora of any suspicion that the diamonds had not been taken with the box, and as this had been received by telegraph, she could not answer

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the duke's question with any clear exposition of her own. She put up her hands and shook her head. "What does Plantagenet think about it?" asked the duke. Plantagenet Palliser was the full name of the duke's nephew and heir. The duke's mind was evidently much disturbed.

"He does n't think that either the box or the diamonds were ever worth five farthings," said Lady Glencora.

"The diamonds not in the box!" repeated the duke. "Madame Max, do you believe that the diamonds were not in the box?" Madame Goesler shrugged her shoulders and made no answer; but the shrugging of her shoulders was quite satisfactory to the duke, who always thought that Madame Goesler did everything better than anybody else. Lady Glencora stayed with her uncle for the best part of an hour, and every word spoken was devoted to Lizzie and her necklace; but as this new idea had been broached, and as they had no other information than than conveyed in the telegram, very little light could be thrown upon it. But on the next morning there came a letter from Barrington Erle to Lady Glencora, which told so much, and hinted so much more, that it will be well to give it to the reader.

"Travellers', 29 Jan., 186–.

"My dear Lady Glencora: I hope you got my telegram yesterday. I had just seen Mackintosh, on whose behalf, however, I must say that he told me as little as he possibly could. It is leaking out, however, on every side, that the police believe that when the box was taken out of the room at Carlisle, the diamonds were not in it. As far as I can learn, they ground this suspi-

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cion on the fact that they cannot trace the stones. They say that, if such a lot of diamonds had been through the thieves' market in London, they would have left some track behind them. As far as I can judge, Mackintosh thinks that Lord George has them, but that her ladyship gave them to him; and that this little game of the robbery at Carlisle was planned to put John Eustace and the lawyers off the scent. If it should turn out that the box was opened before it left Portray, that the door of her ladyship's room was cut by her ladyship's self, or by his lordship with her ladyship's aid, and that the fragments of the box were carried out of the hotel by his lordship in person, it will altogether have been so delightful a plot, that all concerned in it ought to be canonised or at least allowed to keep their plunder. An old detective told me that the opening of the box under the arch of the railway, in an exposed place could hardly have been executed so neatly as was done; that no thief so situated would have given the time necessary to it; and that, if there had been thieves at all at work, they would have been traced. Against this, there is the certain fact, as I have heard from various men engaged in the inquiry, that certain persons among the community of thieves are very much at loggerheads with each other, the higher, or creative department in thiefdom, accusing the lower or mechanical department of gross treachery in having appropriated to its own sole profit plunder, for the taking of which it had undertaken to receive a certain stipulated price. But then it may be the case that his lordship and her ladyship have set such a rumour abroad for the sake of putting the police off the scent. Upon the whole, the little mystery is quite delightful; and has put the bal-

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lot, and poor Mr. Palliser's five-farthinged penny, quite out of joint. Nobody now cares for anything except the Eustace diamonds. Lord George, I am told, has offered to fight everybody or anybody, beginning with Lord Fawn and ending with Major Mackintosh. Should he be innocent, which of course is possible, the thing must be annoying. I should not at all wonder myself if it should turn out that her ladyship left them in Scotland. The place there, however, has been searched, in compliance with an order from the police and by her ladyship's consent.

"Don't let Mr. Palliser quite kill himself. I hope the Bonteen plan answers. I never knew a man who could find more farthings in a shilling than Mr. Bonteen. Remember me very kindly to the duke, and pray enable poor Fawn to keep up his spirits. If he likes to arrange a meeting with Lord George, I shall be only too happy to be his friend. You remember our last duel. Chiltern is with you, and can put Fawn up to the proper way of getting over to Flanders, and of returning, should he chance to escape.

"Yours always most faithfully,

"BARRINGTON ERLE.

"Of course I'll keep you posted in everything respecting the necklace till you come to town yourself."

The whole of this letter Lady Glencora read to the duke, to Lady Chiltern, and to Madame Goesler; and the principal contents of it she repeated to the entire company. It was certainly the general belief at Matching that Lord George had the diamonds in his possession, either with or without the assistance of their late fair possessor.

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The duke was struck with awe when he thought of all the circumstances. "The brother of a marquis!" he said to his nephew's wife. "It 's such a disgrace to the peerage!"

"As for that, duke," said Lady Glencora, "the peerage is used to it by this time."

"I never heard of such an affair as this before."

"I don't see why the brother of a marquis should n't turn thief as well as anybody else. They say he has n't got anything of his own; and I suppose that is what makes men steal other people's property. Peers go into trade, and peeresses gamble on the Stock Exchange. Peers become bankrupt, and the sons of peers run away, just like other men. I don't see why all enterprises should not be open to them. But to think of that little purring cat, Lady Eustace, having been so very — very clever! It makes me quite envious."

All this took place in the morning — that is, about two o'clock; but after dinner the subject became general. There might be some little reticence in regard to Lord Fawn's feelings, but it was not sufficient to banish a subject so interesting from the minds and lips of the company. "The Tewett marriage is to come off, after all," said Mrs. Bonteen. "I 've a letter from dear Mrs. Rutter, telling me so as a fact."

"I wonder whether Miss Roanoke will be allowed to wear one or two of the diamonds at the wedding," suggested one of the private secretaries.

"Nobody will dare to wear a diamond at all next season," said Lady Glencora. "As for my own, I sha'n't think of having them out. I should always feel that I was being inspected."

"Unless they unravel the mystery," said Madame Goesler.

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"I hope they won't do that," said Lady Glencora. "The play is too good to come to an end so soon. If we hear that Lord George is engaged to Lady Eustace, nothing, I suppose, can be done to stop the marriage."

"Why should n't she marry if she pleases?" asked Mr. Palliser.

"I 've not the slightest objection to her being married. I hope she will, with all my heart. I certainly think she should have her husband after buying him at such a price. I suppose Lord Fawn won't forbid the banns." These last words were only whispered to her next neighbour, Lord Chiltern; but poor Lord Fawn saw the whisper, and was aware that it must have had reference to his condition.

On the next morning there came further news. The police had asked permission from their occupants to search the rooms in which lived Lady Eustace and Lord George, and in each case the permission had been refused. So said Barrington Erle in his letter to Lady Glencora. Lord George had told the applicant, very roughly, that nobody should touch an article belonging to him without a search-warrant. If any magistrate would dare to give such a warrant, let him do it. "I'm told that Lord George acts the indignant madman uncommonly well," said Barrington Erle in his letter. As for poor Lizzie, she had fainted when the proposition was made to her. The request was renewed as soon as she had been brought to herself; and then she refused, on the advice, as she said, of her cousin, Mr. Greystock. Barrington Erle went on to say that the police were very much blamed. It was believed that no information could be laid before a magistrate sufficient to justify a search-warrant; and,

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in such circumstances, no search should have been attempted. Such was the public verdict, as declared in Barrington Erle's last letter to Lady Glencora.

Mr. Palliser was of opinion that the attempt to search the lady's house was iniquitous. Mr. Bonteen shook his head, and rather thought that, if he were Home Secretary, he would have had the search made. Lady Chiltern said that, if policemen came to her, they might search everything she had in the world. Mrs. Grey reminded them that all they really knew of the unfortunate woman was, that her jewel-box had been stolen out of her bedroom at her hotel. Madame Goesler was of opinion that a lady who could carry such a box about the country with her deserved to have it stolen. Lord Fawn felt himself obliged to confess that he agreed altogether with Madame Goesler. Unfortunately, he had been acquainted with the lady, and now was constrained to say that her conduct had been such as to justify the suspicions of the police.

"Of course we all suspect her," said Lady Glencora, "and of course we suspect Lord George too; and Mrs. Carbuncle and Miss Roanoke. But then, you know, if I were to lose my diamonds, people would suspect me just the same, or perhaps Plantagenet. It is so delightful to think that a woman has stolen her own property, and put all the police into a state of ferment."

Lord Chiltern declared himself to be heartily sick of the whole subject; and Mr. Grey, who was a very just man, suggested that the evidence, as yet, against anybody, was very slight.

"Of course it 's slight," said Lady Glencora. "If it were more than slight, it would be just like any other robbery, and there would be nothing in it."

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On the same morning Mrs. Bonteen received a second letter from her friend Mrs. Rutter. The Tewett marriage had been certainly broken off. Sir Griffin had been very violent, misbehaving himself grossly in Mrs. Carbuncle's house, and Miss Roanoke had declared that under no circumstances would she ever speak to him again. It was Mrs. Rutter's opinion, however, that this violence had been "put on" by Sir Griffin, who was desirous of escaping from the marriage because of the affair of the diamonds.

"He 's very much bound up with Lord George," said Mrs. Rutter, "and is afraid that he may be implicated."

"In my opinion he 's quite right," said Lord Fawn.

All these matters were told to the duke by Lady Glencora and Madame Goesler in the recesses of his grace's private room; for the duke was now infirm, and did not dine in company unless the day was very auspicious to him. But in the evening he would creep into the drawing-room, and on this occasion he had a word to say about the Eustace diamonds to every one in the room. It was admitted by them all that the robbery had been a godsend in the way of amusing the duke.

"Would n't have her boxes searched, you know," said the duke. "That looks uncommonly suspicious. Perhaps, Lady Chiltern, we shall hear to-morrow morning something more about it."

"Poor dear duke," said Lady Chiltern to her husband.

"Doting old idiot!" he replied.

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CHAPTER XLVIII.

LIZZIE'S CONDITION.

WHEN such a man as Barrington Erle undertakes to send information to such a correspondent as Lady Glencora in reference to such a matter as Lady Eustace's diamonds, he is bound to be full rather than accurate. We may say, indeed, that perfect accuracy would be detrimental rather than otherwise, and would tend to disperse that feeling of mystery which is so gratifying. No suggestion had in truth been made to Lord George de Bruce Carruthers as to the searching of his lordship's boxes and desks. That very eminent detective officer, Mr. Bunfit, had, however, called upon Lord George more than once, and Lord George had declared very plainly that he did not like it.

"If you 'll have the kindness to explain to me what it is you want, I 'll be much obliged to you," Lord George had said to Mr. Bunfit.

"Well, my lord," said Bunfit, "what we want is these diamonds."

"Do you believe that I 've got them?"

"A man in my situation, my lord, never believes anything. We has to suspect, but we never believes."

"You suspect that I stole them?"

"No, my lord; I did n't say that. But things are very queer; are n't they?" The immediate object of Mr. Bunfit's visit on this morning had been to ascertain

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from Lord George whether it was true that his lordship had been with Messrs. Harter and Benjamin, the jewellers, on the morning after his arrival in town. No one from the police had as yet seen either Harter or Benjamin in connection with this robbery; but it may not be too much to say that the argus eyes of Major Mackintosh were upon Messrs. Harter and Benjamin's whole establishment, and it was believed that if the jewels were in London they were locked up in some box within that house. It was thought more than probable by Major Mackintosh and his myrmidons, that the jewels were already at Hamburg; and by this time, as the major had explained to Mr. Camperdown, every one of them might have been reset, or even recut. But it was known that Lord George had been at the house of Messrs. Harter and Benjamin early on the morning after his return to town, and the ingenuous Mr. Bunfit, who, by reason of his situation, never believed anything and only suspected, had expressed a very strong opinion to Major Mackintosh that the necklace had in truth been transferred to the Jews on that morning. That there was nothing "too hot or too heavy" for Messrs. Harter and Benjamin, was quite a creed with the police of the west end of London. Might it not be well to ask Lord George what he had to say about the visit? Should Lord George deny the visit, such denial would go far to confirm Mr. Bunfit. The question was asked, and Lord George did not deny the visit.

"Unfortunately they hold acceptances of mine," said Lord George, "and I am often there."

"We know as they have your lordship's name to paper," said Mr. Bunfit, thanking Lord George, how-

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ever, for his courtesy. It may be understood that all this would be unpleasant to Lord George, and that he should be indignant almost to madness.

But Mr. Erle's information, though certainly defective in regard to Lord George de Bruce Carruthers, had been more correct when he spoke of the lady. An interview that was very terrible to poor Lizzie did take place between her and Mr. Bunfit in Mrs. Carbuncle's house on Tuesday the 30th of January. There had been many interviews between Lizzie and various members of the police force in reference to the diamonds, but the questions put to her had always been asked on the supposition that she might have mislaid the necklace. Was it not possible that she might have thought that she locked it up, but have omitted to place it in the box? As long as these questions had reference to a possible oversight in Scotland, to some carelessness which she might have committed on the night before she left her home, Lizzie upon the whole seemed rather to like the idea. It certainly was possible. She believed thoroughly that the diamonds had been locked by her in the box, but she acknowledged that it might be the case that they had been left on one side. This had happened when the police first began to suspect that the necklace had not been in the box when it was carried out of the Carlisle hotel, but before it had occurred to them that Lord George had been concerned in the robbery, and possibly Lady Eustace herself. Men had been sent down from London, of course at considerable expense, and Portray Castle had been searched, with the consent of its owner, from the weathercock to the foundation-stone, much to the consternation of Miss Macnulty and to the delight of Andy

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Gowran. No trace of the diamonds was found, and Lizzie had so far fraternised with the police. But when Mr. Bunfit called upon her, perhaps for the fifth or sixth time, and suggested that he should be allowed, with the assistance of the female whom he had left behind him in the hall, to search all her ladyship's boxes, drawers, presses, and receptacles in London, the thing took a very different aspect. "You see, my lady," said Mr. Bunfit, excusing the peculiar nature of his request, "it may have got anywhere among your ladyship's things unbeknownst." Lady Eustace and Mrs. Carbuncle were at the time sitting together, and Mrs. Carbuncle was the first to protest. If Mr. Bunfit thought that he was going to search her things, Mr. Bunfit was very much mistaken. What she had suffered about this necklace no man or woman knew, and she meant that there should be an end of it. It was her opinion that the police should have discovered every stone of it days and days ago. At any rate her house was her own, and she gave Mr. Bunfit to understand that his repeated visits were not agreeable to her. But when Mr. Bunfit, without showing the slightest displeasure at the evil things said of him, suggested that the search should be confined to the rooms used exclusively by Lady Eustace, Mrs. Carbuncle absolutely changed her views, and recommended that he should be allowed to have his way.

At that moment the condition of poor Lizzie Eustace was very sad. He who recounts these details has scorned to have a secret between himself and his readers. The diamonds were at this moment locked up within Lizzie's desk. For the last three weeks they had been there — if it may not be more truly said that

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they were lying heavily on her heart. For three weeks had her mind with constant stretch been working on that point — whither should she take the diamonds, and what should she do with them? A certain very wonderful strength she did possess, or she could not have endured the weight of so terrible an anxiety; but from day to day the thing became worse and worse with her, as gradually she perceived that suspicion was attached to herself. Should she confide the secret to Lord George, or to Mrs. Carbuncle, or to Frank Greystock? She thought she could have borne it all if only some one would have borne it with her. But when the moments came in which such confidence might be made, her courage failed her. Lord George she saw frequently; but he was unsympathetic and almost rough with her. She knew that he also was suspected, and she was almost disposed to think that he had planned the robbery. If it were so, if the robbery had been his handiwork, it was not singular that he should be unsympathetic with the owner and probable holder of the prey which he had missed. Nevertheless Lizzie thought that if he would have been soft with her, like a dear, good, genuine Corsair, for half an hour, she would have told him all, and placed the necklace in his hands. And there were moments in which she almost resolved to tell her secret to Mrs. Carbuncle. She had stolen nothing; so she averred to herself. She had intended only to defend and save her own property. Even the lie that she had told, and the telling of which was continued from day to day, had in a measure been forced upon her by circumstances. She thought that Mrs. Carbuncle would sympathise with her in that feeling which had prevented her from speaking the truth when

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first the fact of the robbery was made known to herself in her own bedroom. Mrs. Carbuncle was a lady who told many lies, as Lizzie well knew, and surely could not be horrified at a lie told in such circumstances. But it was not in Lizzie's nature to trust a woman. Mrs. Carbuncle would tell Lord George, and that would destroy everything. When she thought of confiding everything to her cousin, it was always in his absence. The idea became dreadful to her as soon as he was present. She could not dare to own to him that she had sworn falsely to the magistrate at Carlisle. And so the burden had to be borne, increasing every hour in weight, and the poor creature's back was not broad enough to bear it. She thought of the necklace every waking minute, and dreamed of it when she slept. She could not keep herself from unlocking her desk and looking at it twenty times a day, although she knew the peril of such nervous solicitude. If she could only rid herself of it altogether, she was sure now that she would do so. She would throw it into the ocean fathoms deep, if only she could find herself alone upon the ocean. But she felt that, let her go where she might, she would be watched. She might declare to-morrow her intention of going to Ireland, or, for that matter, to America. But, were she to do so, some horrid policeman would be on her track. The iron box had been a terrible nuisance to her; but the iron box had been as nothing compared to the necklace locked up in her desk. From day to day she meditated a plan of taking the thing out into the streets and dropping it in the dark; but she was sure that were she to do so some one would have watched her while she dropped it. She was unwilling to trust her old friend

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Mr. Benjamin; but in these days her favourite scheme was to offer the diamonds for sale to him at some very low price. If he would help her, they might surely be got out of their present hiding-place into his hands. Any man would be powerful to help if there were any man whom she could trust. In furtherance of this scheme she went so far as to break a brooch — a favourite brooch of her own — in order that she might have an excuse for calling at the jewellers'. But even this she postponed from day to day. Circumstances, as they had occurred, had taught her to believe that the police could not insist on breaking open her desk unless some evidence could be brought against her. There was no evidence, and her desk was so far safe. But the same circumstances had made her understand that she was already suspected of some intrigue with reference to the diamonds — though of what she was suspected she did not clearly perceive. As far as she could divine the thoughts of her enemies, they did not seem to suppose that the diamonds were in her possession. It seemed to be believed by those enemies that they had passed into the hands of Lord George. As long as her enemies were on a scent so false, might it not be best that she should remain quiet?

But all the ingenuity, the concentrated force, and trained experience of the police of London would surely be too great and powerful for her in the long run. She could not hope to keep her secret and the diamonds till they should acknowledge themselves to be baffled. And then she was aware of a morbid desire on her own part to tell the secret — of a desire that amounted almost to a disease. It would soon burst her bosom open, unless she could share her

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knowledge with some one. And yet, as she thought of it all, she told herself that she had no friend so fast and true as to justify such confidence. She was ill with anxiety, and — worse than that — Mrs. Carbuncle knew that she was ill. It was acknowledged between them that this affair of the necklace was so terrible as to make a woman ill. Mrs. Carbuncle at present had been gracious enough to admit so much as that. But might it not be probable that Mrs. Carbuncle would come to suspect that she did not know the whole secret? Mrs. Carbuncle had already, on more than one occasion, said a little word or two which had been unpleasant.

Such was Lizzie's condition when Mr. Bunfit came, with his authoritative request to be allowed to inspect Lizzie's boxes — and when Mrs. Carbuncle, having secured her own privacy, expressed her opinion that Mr. Bunfit should be allowed to do as he desired.

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CHAPTER XLIX.

BUNFIT AND GAGER.

As soon as the words were out of Mrs. Carbuncle's mouth — those ill-natured words in which she expressed her assent to Mr. Bunfit's proposition that a search should be made after the diamonds among all the possessions of Lady Eustace which were now lodged in her own house — poor Lizzie's courage deserted her entirely. She had been very courageous; for, though her powers of endurance had sometimes nearly deserted her, though her heart had often failed her, still she had gone on and had endured and been silent. To endure and to be silent in her position did require great courage. She was all alone in her misery, and could see no way out of it. The diamonds were heavy as a load of lead within her bosom. And yet she had persevered. Now, as she heard Mrs. Carbuncle's words, her courage failed her. There came some obstruction in her throat, so that she could not speak. She felt as though her heart were breaking. She put out both her hands and could not draw them back again. She knew that she was betraying herself by her weakness. She could just hear the man explaining that the search was merely a thing of ceremony — just to satisfy everybody that there was no mistake — and then she fainted. So far, Barrington Erle was correct in the information given by him to Lady Glencora. She pressed one hand

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against her heart, gasped for breath, and then fell back upon the sofa. Perhaps she could have done nothing better. Had the fainting been counterfeit, the measure would have shown ability. But the fainting was altogether true. Mrs. Carbuncle first, and then Mr. Bunfit, hurried from their seats to help her. To neither of them did it occur for a moment that the fit was false.

"The whole thing has been too much for her," said Mrs. Carbuncle severely, ringing the bell at the same time for further aid.

"No doubt — mum; no doubt. We has to see a deal of this sort of thing. Just a little air, if you please, mum — and as much water as 'd go to christen a babby. That 's always best, mum."

"If you 'll have the kindness to stand on one side," said Mrs. Carbuncle, as she stretched Lizzie on the sofa.

"Certainly, mum," said Bunfit, standing erect by the wall, but not showing the slightest disposition to leave the room.

"You had better go," said Mrs. Carbuncle — loudly and very severely.

"I 'll just stay and see her come to, mum. I won't do her a morsel of harm, mum. Sometimes they faints at the very first sight of such as we; but we has to bear it. A little more air, if you could, mum — and just dash the water on in drops like. They feels a drop more than they would a bucket-full — and then when they comes to they has n't to change theirselves."

Bunfit's advice, founded on much experience, was good, and Lizzie gradually came to herself and opened her eyes. She immediately clutched at her breast, feeling for her key. She found it unmoved, but before

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her finger had recognised the touch, her quick mind had told her how wrong the movement had been. It had been lost upon Mrs. Carbuncle, but not on Mr. Bunfit. He did not at once think that she had the diamonds in her desk; but he felt almost sure that there was something in her possession — probably some document — which, if found, would place him on the track of the diamonds. But he could not compel a search. "Your ladyship 'll soon be better," said Bunfit graciously. Lizzie endeavoured to smile as she expressed her assent to this proposition. "As I was saying to the elder lady ——"

"Saying to who, sir?" exclaimed Mrs. Carbuncle, rising up in wrath. "Elder indeed!"

"As I was venturing to explain, these fits of fainting come often in our way. Thieves, mum — that is, the regulars — don't mind us a bit, and the women is more hardeneder than the men; but when we has to speak to a lady, it is so often that she goes off like that! I 've known 'm do it just at being looked at."

"Don't you think, sir, that you 'd better leave us now?" said Mrs. Carbuncle.

"Indeed you had," said Lizzie. "I 'm fit for nothing just at present."

"We won't disturb your ladyship the least in life," said Mr. Bunfit, "if you 'll only just let us have your keys. Your servant can be with us, and we won't move one tittle of anything." But Lizzie, though she was still suffering that ineffable sickness which always accompanies and follows a real fainting-fit, would not surrender her keys. Already had an excuse for not doing so occurred to her. But for a while she seemed to hesitate. "I don't demand it, Lady Eustace," said

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Mr. Bunfit, "but if you 'll allow me to say so, I do think it will look better for your ladyship."

"I can take no step without consulting my cousin, Mr. Greystock," said Lizzie; and having thought of this she adhered to it. The detective supplied her with many reasons for giving up her keys, alleging that it would do no harm, and that her refusal would create infinite suspicions. But Lizzie had formed her answer and stuck to it. She always consulted her cousin, and always acted upon his advice. He had already cautioned her not to take any steps without his sanction. She would do nothing till he consented. If Mr. Bunfit would see Mr. Greystock, and if Mr. Greystock would come to her and tell her to submit — she would submit. Ill as she was, she could be obstinate, and Bunfit left the house without having been able to finger that key which he felt sure that Lady Eustace carried somewhere on her person.

As he walked back to his own quarters in Scotland Yard, Bunfit was by no means dissatisfied with his morning's work. He had not expected to find anything with Lady Eustace, and, when she fainted, had not hoped to be allowed to search. But he was now sure that her ladyship was possessed, at any rate, of some guilty knowledge. Bunfit was one of those who, almost from the first, had believed that the box was empty when taken out of the hotel. "Stones like them must turn up more or less," was Bunfit's great argument. That the police should already have found the stones themselves was not perhaps probable; but had any ordinary thieves had them in their hands, they could not have been passed on without leaving

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a trace behind them. It was his opinion that the box had been opened and the door cut by the instrumentality and concurrence of Lord George de Bruce Carruthers, with the assistance of some one well-skilled mechanical thief. Nothing could be made out of the tall footman. Indeed, the tall footman had already been set at liberty, although he was known to have evil associates; and the tall footman was now loud in demanding compensation for the injury done to him. Many believed that the tall footman had been concerned in the matter, many, that is, among the experienced craftsmen of the police force. Bunfit thought otherwise. Bunfit believed that the diamonds were now either in the possession of Lord George or of Harter and Benjamin, that they had been handed over to Lord George to save them from Messrs. Camperdown, and the lawsuit, and that Lord George and the lady were lovers. The lady's conduct at their last interview, her fit of fainting, and her clutching for the key, all confirmed Bunfit in his opinion. But unfortunately for Bunfit he was almost alone in his opinion. There were men in the force, high in their profession as detectives, who avowed that certainly two very experienced and well-known thieves had been concerned in the business. That a certain Mr. Smiler had been there, a gentleman for whom the whole police of London entertained a feeling which approached to veneration, and that most diminutive of full-grown thieves, Billy Cann, most diminutive but at the same time most expert, was not doubted by some minds which were apt to doubt till conviction had become certainty. The traveller who had left the Scotch train at Dumfries had been a very small man, and it was

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a known fact that Mr. Smiler had left London by train from the Euston Square station, on the day before that on which Lizzie and her party had reached Carlisle. If it were so, if Mr. Smiler and Billy Cann had both been at work at the hotel, then — so argued they who opposed the Bunfit theory — it was hardly conceivable that the robbery should have been arranged by Lord George. According to the Bunfit theory the only thing needed by the conspirators had been that the diamonds should be handed over by Lady Eustace to Lord George in such a way as to escape suspicion that such transfer had been made. This might have been done with very little trouble, by simply leaving the box empty, with the key in it. The door of the bedroom had been opened by skilful professional men, and the box had been forced by the use of tools which none but professional gentlemen would possess. Was it probable that Lord George would have committed himself with such men, and incurred the very heavy expense of paying for their services, when he was, according to the Bunfit theory, able to get at the diamonds without any such trouble, danger, and expenditure? There was a young detective in the force, very clever — almost too clever, and certainly a little too fast — Gager by name, who declared that the Bunfit theory "warn't on the cards." According to Gager's information, Smiler was at this moment a broken-hearted man, ranging between mad indignation and suicidal despondency, because he had been treated with treachery in some direction. Mr. Gager was as fully convinced as Bunfit that the diamonds had not been in the box. There was bitter, raging, heart-breaking disappointment about the diamonds in more

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quarters than one. That there had been a double robbery Gager was quite sure; or rather a robbery in which two sets of thieves had been concerned, and in which one set had been duped by the other set. In this affair Mr. Smiler and poor little Billy Cann had been the dupes. So far Gager's mind had arrived at certainty. But then how had they been duped, and who had duped them? And who had employed them? Such a robbery would hardly have been arranged and executed except on commission. Even Mr. Smiler would not have burdened himself with such diamonds without knowing what to do with them, and what he should get for them. That they were intended ultimately for the hands of Messrs. Harter and Benjamin, Gager almost believed. And Gager was inclined to think that Messrs. Harter and Benjamin — or rather Mr. Benjamin, for Mr. Harter himself was almost too old for work requiring so very great mental activity — that Mr. Benjamin, fearing the honesty of his executive officer Mr. Smiler, had been splendidly treacherous to his subordinate. Gager had not quite completed his theory; but he was very firm on one great point, that the thieves at Carlisle had been genuine thieves, thinking that they were stealing the diamonds, and finding their mistake out when the box had been opened by them under the bridge. "Who have 'em, then?" asked Bunfit of his younger brother, in a disparaging whisper.

"Well; yes; who 'ave 'em? It 's easy to say, who 'ave 'em? Suppose 'e 'ave 'em." The "he" alluded to by Gager was Lord George de Bruce Carruthers. "But laws, Bunfit, they 're gone — weeks ago. You know that Bunfit." This had occurred before the in-

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tended search among poor Lizzie's boxes, but Bunfit's theory had not been shaken. Bunfit could see all round his own theory. It was a whole, and the motives as well as the operations of the persons concerned were explained by it. But the Gager theory only went to show what had not been done, and offered no explanation of the accomplished scheme. Then Bunfit went a little further in his theory, not disdaining to accept something from Gager. Perhaps Lord George had engaged these men, and had afterwards found it practicable to get the diamonds without their assistance. On one great point all concerned in the inquiry were in unison — that the diamonds had not been in the box when it was carried out of the bedroom at Carlisle. The great point of difference consisted in this, that whereas Gager was sure that the robbery when committed had been genuine, Bunfit was of opinion that the box had been first opened, and then taken out of the hotel in order that the police might be put on a wrong track.

The matter was becoming very important. Two or three of the leading newspapers had first hinted at and then openly condemned the incompetence and slowness of the police. Such censure, as we all know, is very common, and in nine cases out of ten it is unjust. They who write it probably know but little of the circumstances; and, in speaking of a failure here and a failure there, make no reference to the numerous successes, which are so customary as to partake of the nature of routine. It is the same in regard to all public matters; army matters, navy matters, poor-law matters, and post-office matters. Day after day, and almost every day, one meets censure which is felt to be unjust; but the

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general result of all this injustice is increased efficiency. The coach does go the faster because of the whip in the coachman's hand, though the horse driven may never have deserved the thong. In this matter of the Eustace diamonds the police had been very active; but they had been unsuccessful and had consequently been abused. The robbery was now more than three weeks old. Property to the amount of ten thousand pounds had been abstracted, and as yet the police had not even formed an assured opinion on the subject! Had the same thing occurred in New York or Paris every diamond would by this time have been traced. Such were the assertions made, and the police were instigated to new exertions. Bunfit would have jeopardised his right hand, and Gager his life, to get at the secret. Even Major Mackintosh was anxious.

The facts of the claim made by Mr. Camperdown, and of the bill which had been filed in Chancery for the recovery of the diamonds, were of course widely known, and added much to the general interest and complexity. It was averred that Mr. Camperdown's determination to get the diamonds had been very energetic, and Lady Eustace's determination to keep them equally so. Wonderful stories were told of Lizzie's courage, energy, and resolution. There was hardly a lawyer of repute but took up the question, and had an opinion as to Lizzie's right to the necklace. The Attorney and Solicitor-General were dead against her, asserting that the diamonds certainly did not pass to her under the will, and could not have become hers by gift. But they were members of a liberal government, and of course Antilizzieite. Gentlemen who were equal to them in learning, who had held offices

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equally high, were distinctly of a different opinion. Lady Eustace might probably claim the jewels as paraphernalia properly appertaining to her rank; in which claim the bestowal of them by her husband would no doubt assist her. And to these gentlemen — who were Lizzieites and of course Conservatives in politics — it was by no means clear that the diamonds did not pass to her by will. If it could be shown that the diamonds had been lately kept in Scotland, the ex-Attorney-General thought that they would so pass. All which questions, now that the jewels had been lost, were discussed openly, and added greatly to the anxiety of the police. Both Lizzieites and Antilizzieites were disposed to think that Lizzie was very clever.

Frank Greystock in these days took up his cousin's part altogether in good faith. He entertained not the slightest suspicion that she was deceiving him in regard to the diamonds. That the robbery had been a bona fide robbery, and that Lizzie had lost her treasure was to him beyond doubt. He had gradually convinced himself that Mr. Camperdown was wrong in his claim, and was strongly of opinion that Lord Fawn had disgraced himself by his conduct to the lady. When he now heard, as he did hear, that some undefined suspicion was attached to his cousin, and when he heard also — as unfortunately he did hear — that Lord Fawn had encouraged that suspicion, he was very irate, and said grievous things of Lord Fawn. It seemed to him to be the extremity of cruelty that suspicion should be attached to his cousin because she had been robbed of her jewels. He was among those who were most severe in their denunciation of the police — and was the more

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so, because he had heard it asserted that the necklace had not in truth been stolen. He busied himself very much in the matter, and even interrogated John Eustace as to his intentions. "My dear fellow," said Eustace, "if you hated those diamonds as much as I do, you would never mention them again." Greystock declared that this expression of aversion to the subject might be all very well for Mr. Eustace, but that he found himself bound to defend his cousin. "You cannot defend her against me," said Eustace, "for I do not attack her. I have never said a word against her. I went down to Portray when she asked me. As far as I am concerned she is perfectly welcome to wear the necklace, if she can get it back again. I will not make or meddle in the matter one way or the other." Frank, after that, went to Mr. Camperdown, but he could get no satisfaction from the attorney. Mr. Camperdown would only say that he had a duty to do, and that he must do it. On the matter of the robbery he refused to give an opinion. That was in the hands of the police. Should the diamonds be recovered, he would, of course, claim them on behalf of the estate. In his opinion, whether the diamonds were recovered or not, Lady Eustace was responsible to the estate for their value. In opposition, first to the entreaties, and then to the demands of her late husband's family, she had insisted on absurdly carrying about with her an enormous amount of property which did not belong to her. Mr. Camperdown opined that she must pay for the lost diamonds out of her jointure. Frank, in a huff, declared that, as far as he could see, the diamonds belonged to his cousin; in answer to which Mr. Camperdown suggested that the question was one for the decision of the Vice-

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Chancellor. Frank Greystock found that he could do nothing with Mr. Camperdown, and felt that he could wreak his vengeance only on Lord Fawn.

Bunfit, when he returned from Mrs. Carbuncle's house to Scotland Yard, had an interview with Major Mackintosh. "Well, Bunfit, have you seen the lady?"

"Yes, I did see her, sir."

"And what came of it?"

"She fainted away, sir — just as they always do."

"There was no search, I suppose?"

"No, sir; no search. She would n't have it, unless her cousin, Mr. Greystock, permitted."

"I did n't think she would."

"Nor yet did n't I, sir. But I 'll tell you what it is, major. She knows all about it."

"You think she does, Bunfit?"

"She does, sir; and she 's got something locked up somewhere in that house as 'd elucidate the whole of this aggravating mystery, if only we could get at it, Major ——"

"Well, Bunfit."

"I ain't noways sure as she ain't got them very diamonds themselves locked up, or, perhaps, tied round her person."

"Neither am I sure that she has not," said the major.

"The robbery at Carlisle was no robbery," continued Bunfit. "It was a got-up plant, and about the best as I ever knowed. It 's my mind that it was a got-up plant between her ladyship and his lordship; and either the one or the other is just keeping the diamonds till it 's safe to take 'em into the market."

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CHAPTER L.

IN HERTFORD STREET.

DURING all this time Lucinda Roanoke was engaged to marry Sir Griffin Tewett, and the lover was an occasional visitor in Hertford street. Mrs. Carbuncle was as anxious as ever that the marriage should be celebrated on the appointed day, and though there had been repeated quarrels, nothing had as yet taken place to make her despond. Sir Griffin would make some offensive speech. Lucinda would tell him that she had no desire ever to see him again, and then the baronet, usually under the instigation of Lord George, would make some awkward apology. Mrs. Carbuncle, whose life at this period was not a pleasant one, would behave on such occasions with great patience, and sometimes with great courage. Lizzie, who in her present emergency, could not bear the idea of losing the assistance of any friend, was soft and graceful, and even gracious, to the bear. The bear himself certainly seemed to desire the marriage, though he would so often give offence which made any prospect of a marriage almost impossible. But with Sir Griffin, when the prize seemed to be lost, it again became valuable. He would talk about his passionate love to Mrs. Carbuncle and to Lizzie, and then, when things had been made straight for him, he would insult them, and neglect Lucinda. To Lucinda herself, however, he would rarely

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dare to say such words as he used daily to the other two ladies in the house. What could have been the man's own idea of his future married life, how can any reader be made to understand, or any writer adequately describe? He must have known that the woman despised him, and hated him. In the very bottom of his heart he feared her. He had no idea of other pleasures from her society than what might arise to him from the pride of having married a beautiful woman. Had she shown the slightest fondness for him, the slightest fear that she might lose him, the slightest feeling that she had won a valuable prize in getting him, he would have scorned her, and jilted her without the slightest remorse. But the scorn came from her, and it beat him down. "Yes, you hate me, and would fain be rid of me; but you have said that you will be my wife, and you cannot now escape me." Sir Griffin did not exactly speak such words as these, but he acted them. Lucinda would bear his presence, sitting apart from him, silent, imperious, but very beautiful. People said that she became more handsome from day to day, and she did so, in spite of her agony. Hers was a face which could stand such condition of the heart without fading or sinking under it. She did not weep, or lose her colour, or become thin. The pretty softness of a girl, delicate feminine weakness, or laughing eyes and pouting lips, no one expected from her. Sir Griffin, in the early days of their acquaintance, had found her to be a woman with a character for beauty, and she was now more beautiful than ever. He probably thought that he loved her; but, at any rate, he was determined that he would marry her.

He had expressed himself more than once as very

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angry about this affair of the jewels. He had told Mrs. Carbuncle that her inmate, Lady Eustace, was suspected by the police, and that it might be well that Lady Eustace should be — be made to go, in fact. But it did not suit Mrs. Carbuncle that Lady Eustace should be made to go; nor did it suit Lord George de Bruce Carruthers. Lord George, at Mrs. Carbuncle's instance, had snubbed Sir Griffin more than once, and then it came to pass that he was snubbed yet again more violently than before. He was at the house in Hertford street on the day of Mr. Bunfit's visit, some hours after Mr. Bunfit was gone, when Lizzie was still lying on her bed up-stairs, nearly beaten by the great danger which had oppressed her. He was told of Mr. Bunfit's visit, and then again said that he thought that the continued residence of Lady Eustace beneath that roof was a misfortune. "Would you wish us to turn her out because her necklace has been stolen?" asked Mrs. Carbuncle.

"People say very queer things," said Sir Griffin.

"So they do, Sir Griffin," continued Mrs. Carbuncle. "The say such queer things that I can hardly understand that they should be allowed to say them. I am told that the police absolutely suggest that Lord George stole the diamonds."

"That 's nonsense."

"No doubt, Sir Griffin. And so is the other nonsense. Do you mean to tell us that you believe that Lady Eustace stole her own diamonds?"

"I don't see the use of having her here. Situated as I am, I have a right to object to it."

"Situated as you are, Sir Griffin!" said Lucinda.

"Well, yes, of course; if we are to be married,

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I cannot but think a good deal of the persons you stay with."

"You were very glad to stay yourself with Lady Eustace at Portray," said Lucinda.

"I went there to follow you," said Sir Griffin gallantly.

"I wish with all my heart you had stayed away," said Lucinda. At that moment Lord George was shown into the room, and Miss Roanoke continued speaking, determined that Lord George should know how the bear was conducting himself. "Sir Griffin is saying that my aunt ought to turn Lady Eustace out of the house."

"Not quite that," said Sir Griffin with an attempt at laughter.

"Quite that," said Lucinda. "I don't suppose that he suspects poor Lady Eustace, but he thinks that my aunt's friend should be like Cæsar's wife, above the suspicion of others."

"If you would mind your own business, Tewett," said Lord George, "it would be a deal better for us all. I wonder Mrs. Carbuncle does not turn you out of the room for making such a proposition here. If it were my room, I would."

"I suppose I can say what I please to Mrs. Carbuncle? Miss Roanoke is not going to be your wife."

"It is my belief that Miss Roanoke will be nobody's wife, at any rate, for the present," said that young lady; upon which Sir Griffin left the room, muttering some words, which might have been, perhaps, intended for an adieu. Immediately after this Lizzie came in, moving slowly, but without a sound, like a ghost, with pale cheeks and dishevelled hair, and that weary worn

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look of illness which was become customary with her. She greeted Lord George with a faint attempt at a smile, and seated herself in a corner of a sofa. She asked whether he had been told the story of the proposed search, and then bade her friend Mrs. Carbuncle describe the scene.

"If it goes on like this it will kill me," said Lizzie.

"They are treating me in precisely the same way," said Lord George."

"But think of your strength and of my weakness, Lord George."

"By heavens, I don't know," said Lord George. "In this matter your weakness is stronger than any strength of mine. I never was so cut up in my life. It was a good joke when we talked of the suspicions of that fellow at Carlisle as we came up by the railway, but it is no joke now. I 've had men with me, almost asking to search among my things."

"They have quite asked me," said Lizzie piteously.

"You; yes. But there 's some reason in that. These infernal diamonds did belong to you, or, at any rate you had them. You are the last person known to have seen them. Even if you had them still, you 'd only have what you call your own." Lizzie looked at him with all her eyes and listened to him with all her ears. "But what the mischief can I have had to do with them?"

"It 's very hard upon you," said Mrs. Carbuncle.

"Unless I stole them," continued Lord George.

"Which is so absurd, you know," said Lizzie.

"That a pig-headed provincial fool should have taken me for a midnight thief, did not disturb me much. I don't think I am very easily annoyed by

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what other people think of me. But these fellows, I suppose, were sent here by the head of the metropolitan police; and everybody knows that they have been sent. Because I was civil enough to you women to look after you coming up to town, and because one of you was careless enough to lose her jewels, I — I am to be talked about all over London as the man who took them!" This was not spoken with much courtesy to the ladies present. Lord George had dropped that customary chivalry of manner which, in ordinary life, makes it to be quite out of the question that a man shall be uncivil to a woman. He had escaped from conventional usage into rough, truthful speech, under stress from the extremity of the hardship to which he had been subjected. And the women understood it and appreciated it, and liked it rather than otherwise. To Lizzie it seemed fitting that a Corsair so circumstanced should be as uncivil as he pleased; and Mrs. Carbuncle had long been accustomed to her friend's moods.

"They can't really think it," said Mrs. Carbuncle.

"Somebody thinks it. I am told that your particular friend, Lord Fawn," — this he said, specially addressing Lizzie, — "has expressed a strong opinion that I carry about the necklace always in my pocket. I trust to have the opportunity of wringing his neck some day."

"I do so wish you would," said Lizzie.

"I shall not lose a chance if I can get it. Before all this occurred, I should have said of myself that nothing of the kind could put me out. I don't think there is a man in the world cares less what people say of him than I do. I am as indifferent to ordinary tittle-

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tattle as a rhinoceros. But, by George, when it comes to stealing ten thousand pounds' worth of diamonds, and the delicate attentions of all the metropolitan police, one begins to feel that one is vulnerable. When I get up in the morning, I half feel that I shall be locked up before night, and I can see in the eyes of every man I meet that he takes me for the prince of burglars!"

"And it is all my fault," said Lizzie.

"I wish the diamonds had been thrown into the sea," said Mrs. Carbuncle.

"What do you think about them yourself?" asked Lucinda.

"I don't know what to think. I 'm at a dead loss. You know that man, Mr. Benjamin, Lady Eustace?" Lizzie, with a little start, answered that she did, that she had had dealings with him before her marriage, and had once owed him two or three hundred pounds. As the man's name had been mentioned, she thought it better to own as much. "So he tells me. Now, in all London, I don't suppose there is a greater rascal than Benjamin."

"I did n't know that," said Lizzie.

"But I did; and with that rascal I have had money dealings for the last six or seven years. He has cashed bills for me, and has my name to bills now — and Sir Griffin's too. I 'm half inclined to think that he has got the diamonds."

"Do you indeed?" said Mrs. Carbuncle.

"Mr. Benjamin!" said Lizzie.

"And he returns the compliment."

"How does he return it?" asked Mrs. Carbuncle.

"He either thinks that I 've got 'em or he wants to

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make me believe that he thinks so. He has n't dared to say it — but that 's his intention. Such an opinion from such a man on such a subject would be quite a compliment. And I feel it. But yet it troubles me. You know that greasy, Israelitish smile of his, Lady Eustace." Lizzie nodded her head and tried to smile. "When I asked him yesterday about the diamonds, he leered at me and rubbed his hands. 'It 's a pretty little game — ain't it, Lord George?' he said. I told him that I thought it a very bad game, and that I hoped the police would have the thief and the necklace soon. 'It 's been managed a deal too well for that, Lord George — don't you think so?'" Lord George mimicked the Jew as he repeated the words, and the ladies, of course, laughed. But poor Lizzie's attempt at laughter was very sorry. "I told him to his face that I thought he had them among his treasures. 'No, no, no, Lord George,' he said, and seemed quite to enjoy the joke. If he 's got them himself, he can't think that I have them; but if he has not, I don't doubt but he believes that I have. And I 'll tell you another person who suspects me."

"What fools they are!" said Lizzie.

"I don't know how that may be. Sir Griffin, Lucinda, is n't at all sure but what I have them in my pocket."

"I can believe anything of him," said Lucinda.

"And it seems he can believe anything of me. I shall begin to think soon that I did take them, myself — or, at any rate, that I ought to have done so. I wonder what you three women think of it. If you do think I 've got 'em, don't scruple to say so. I 'm quite used to it, and it won't hurt me any further." The

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ladies again laughed. "You must have your suspicions," continued he.

"I suppose some of the London thieves did get them," said Mrs. Carbuncle.

"The police say the box was empty," said Lord George.

"How can the police know?" asked Lucinda. "They were n't there to see. Of course the thieves would say that they did n't take them."

"What do you think, Lady Eustace?"

"I don't know what to think. Perhaps Mr. Camperdown did it."

"Or the Lord Chancellor," said Lord George. "One is just as likely as the other. I wish I could get at what you really think. The whole thing would be so complete if all you three suspected me. I can't get out of it all by going to Paris or Kamtchatka, as I should have half a dozen detectives on my heels wherever I went. I must brazen it out here; and the worst of it is, that I feel that a look of guilt is creeping over me. I have a sort of conviction growing upon me that I shall be taken up and tried, and that a jury will find me guilty. I dream about it; and if — as is probable — it drives me mad, I 'm sure that I shall accuse myself in my madness. There 's a fascination about it that I can't explain or escape. I go on thinking how I would have done it if I did do it. I spend hours in calculating how much I would have realised, and where I would have found my market. I could n't keep myself from asking Benjamin the other day how much they would be worth to him."

"What did he say?" asked Lizzie, who sat gazing upon the Corsair, and who was now herself fascinated.

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Lord George was walking about the room, then sitting for a moment in one chair and again in another, and after a while leaning on the mantel-piece. In his speaking he addressed himself almost exclusively to Lizzie, who could not keep her eyes from his.

"He grinned greasily," said the Corsair, "and told me they had already been offered to him once before by you."

"That's false!" said Lizzie.

"Very likely. And then he said that no doubt they'd fall into his hands some day. 'Would n't it be a game, Lord George,' he said, 'if, after all, they should be no more than paste?' That made me think he had got them, and that he'd get paste diamonds put into the same setting — and then give them up with some story of his own making. 'You'd know whether they were paste or not, would n't you, Lord George?' he asked." The Corsair, as he repeated Mr. Benjamin's words, imitated the Jew's manner so well that he made Lizzie shudder. "While I was there, a detective named Gager came in."

"The same man who came here, perhaps," suggested Mrs. Carbuncle.

"I think not. He seemed to be quite intimate with Mr. Benjamin, and went on at once about the diamonds. Benjamin said that they'd made their way over to Paris, and that he'd heard of them. I found myself getting quite intimate with Mr. Gager, who seemed hardly to scruple at showing that he thought that Benjamin and I were confederates. Mr. Camperdown has offered four hundred pounds reward for the jewels, to be paid on their surrender to the hands of Mr. Garnett, the jeweller. Gager declared that, if any

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ordinary thief had them, they would be given up at once for that sum."

"That's true, I suppose," said Mrs. Carbuncle.

"How would the ordinary thief get his money without being detected? Who would dare to walk into Garnett's shop with the diamonds in his hands and ask for the four hundred pounds? Besides they have been sold to some one, and, as I believe, to my dear friend, Mr. Benjamin. 'I suppose you ain't a-going anywhere just at present, Lord George?' said that fellow Gager. 'What the devil's that to you?' I asked him. He just laughed and shook his head. I don't doubt but that there's a policeman about waiting till I leave this house; or looking at me now with a magnifying glass from the windows at the other side. They've photographed me while I'm going about, and published a list of every hair on my face in the 'Hue and Cry.' I dined at the club yesterday, and found a strange waiter. I feel certain that he was a policeman done up in livery all for my sake. I turned sharp round in the street and yesterday, and found a man at a corner. I am sure that man was watching me, and was looking at my pockets to see whether the jewel case was there. As for myself, I can think of nothing else. I wish I had got them. I should have something then to pay me for all this nuisance."

"I do wish you had," said Lizzie.

"What I should do with them I cannot even imagine. I am always thinking of that, too, making plans for getting rid of them, supposing I had stolen them. My belief is, that I should be so sick of them that I should chuck them over the bridge into the river, only that I should fear that some policeman's eye would be on me as I

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did it. My present position is not comfortable, but if I had got them I think that the weight of them would crush me altogether. Having a handle to my name, and being a lord, or, at least, called a lord, makes it all the worse. People are so pleased to think that a lord should have a stolen a necklace!"

Lizzie listened to it all with a strange fascination. If this strong man were so much upset by the bare suspicion, what must be her condition? The jewels were in her desk up-stairs, and the police had been with her also, were even now probably looking after her and watching her. How much more difficult must it be for her to deal with the diamonds than it would have been for this man. Presently Mrs. Carbuncle left the room, and Lucinda followed her. Lizzie saw them go, and did not dare to go with them. She felt as though her limbs would not have carried her to the door. She was now alone with her Corsair; and she looked up timidly into his deep-set eyes, as he came and stood over her. "Tell me all that you know about it," he said, in that deep, low voice which, from her first acquaintance with him, had filled her with interest, and almost with awe.

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CHAPTER LI.

CONFIDENCE.

LIZZIE EUSTACE was speechless as she continued to look up into the Corsair's face. She ought to have answered him briskly, either with indignation or with a touch of humour. But she could not answer him at all. She was desired to tell him all that she knew about the robbery, and she was unable to declare that she knew nothing. How much did he suspect? What did he believe? Had she been watched by Mrs. Carbuncle, and had something of the truth been told to him? And then would it not be better for her that he should know it all? Unsupported and alone she could not bear the trouble which was on her. If she were driven to tell her secret to any one, had she not better tell it to him? She knew that if she did so, she would be a creature in his hands to be dealt with as he pleased; but would there not be a certain charm in being so mastered? He was but a pinchbeck lord. She had wit enough to know that; but then she had wit enough also to feel that she herself was but a pinchbeck lady. He would be fit for her, and she for him, if only he would take her. Since her day-dreams first began, she had been longing for a Corsair; and here he was, not kneeling at her feet, but standing over her, as became a Corsair. At any rate he had mastered her now, and she could not speak to him.

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He waited perhaps a minute, looking at her, before he renewed his question; and the minute seemed to her to be an age. During every second her power beneath his gaze sank lower and lower. There gradually came a grim smile over his face, and she was sure that he could read her very heart. Then he called her by her Christian name, as he had never called her before. "Come, Lizzie," he said, "you might as well tell me all about it. You know."

"Know what?" The words were audible to him, though they were uttered in the lowest whisper.

"About this d—— necklace. What is it all? Where are they? And how did you manage it?"

"I did n't manage anything!"

"But you know where they are?" He paused again, still gazing at her. Gradually there came across his face, or she fancied that it was so, a look of ferocity which thoroughly frightened her. If he should turn against her, and be leagued with the police against her, what chance would she have? "You know where they are," he said, repeating his words. Then at last she nodded her head, assenting to his assertion. "And where are they? Come, out with it! If you won't tell me, you must tell some one else. There has been a deal too much of this already."

"You won't betray me?"

"Not if you deal openly with me."

"I will; indeed I will. And it was all an accident. When I took them out of the box, I only did it for safety."

"You did take them out of the box then?" Again she nodded her head. "And have got them now?" There was another nod. "And where are they? Come;

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with such an enterprising spirit as yours, you ought to be able to speak. Has Benjamin got them?"

"Oh no."

"And he knows nothing about them?"

"Nothing."

"Then I have wronged in my thoughts that son of Abraham."

"Nobody knows anything," said Lizzie.

"Not even Jane or Lucinda?"

"Nothing at all."

"Then you have kept your secret marvellously. And where are they?"

"Up-stairs."

"In your bedroom?"

"In my desk in the little sitting-room."

"The Lord be good to us!" ejaculated Lord George. "All the police in London, from the chief downwards, are agog about this necklace. Every well-known thief in the town is envied by every other thief because he is thought to have had a finger in the pie. I am suspected, and Mr. Benjamin is suspected; Sir Griffin is suspected, and half the jewellers in London and Paris are supposed to have the stones in their keeping. Every man and woman is talking about it, and people are quarrelling about it till they almost cut each other's throats; and all the while you have got them locked up in your desk! How on earth did you get the box broken open and then conveyed out of your room at Carlisle?"

Then Lizzie, in a frightened whisper, with her eyes often turned on the floor, told the whole story. "If I'd had a minute to think of it," she said, "I would have confessed the truth at Carlisle. Why should I

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want to steal what was my own? But they came to me all so quickly, and I did n't like to say that I had them under my pillow."

"I dare say not."

"And then I could n't tell anybody afterwards. I always meant to tell you, from the very first, because I knew you would be good to me. They are my own. Surely I might do what I liked with my own?"

"Well, yes; in one way. But you see there was a lawsuit in Chancery going on about them; and then you committed perjury at Carlisle. And altogether, it 's not quite straight sailing, you know."

"I suppose not."

"Hardly. Major Mackintosh, and the magistrates, and Messrs. Bunfit and Gager won't settle down, peaceable and satisfied, when they hear the end of the story. And I think Messrs. Camperdown will have a bill against you. It 's been uncommonly clever, but I don't see the use of it."

"I 've been very foolish," said Lizzie; "but you won't desert me?"

"Upon my word I don't know what I 'm to do."

"Will you have them as a present?"

"Certainly not."

"They 're worth ever so much; ten thousand pounds! And they are my own, to do just what I please with them."

"You are very good; but what should I do with them?"

"Sell them."

"Who 'd buy them? And before a week was over I should be in prison, and in a couple of months should

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be standing at the Old Bailey at my trial. I could n't just do that, my dear."

"What will you do for me? You are my friend — ain't you?" The diamond necklace was not a desirable possession in the eyes of Lord George de Bruce Carruthers; but Portray Castle, with its income, and the fact that Lizzie Eustace was still a very young woman, was desirable. Her prettiness too was not altogether thrown away on Lord George, though, as he was wont to say to himself, he was too old now to sacrifice much for such a toy as that. Something he must do, if only because of the knowledge which had come to him. He could not go away and leave her, and neither say nor do anything in the matter. And he could not betray her to the police.

"You will not desert me," she said, taking hold of his hand, and kissing it as a suppliant.

He passed his arm round her waist, but more as though she were a child than a woman, as he stood thinking. Of all the affairs in which he had ever been engaged, it was the most difficult. She submitted to his embrace, and leaned upon his shoulder, and looked up into his face. If he would only tell her that he loved her, then he would be bound to her, then must he share with her the burthen of the diamonds, then must he be true to her. "George," she said, and burst into a low suppressed wailing, with her face hidden upon his arm.

"That 's all very well," said he, still holding her, for she was pleasant to hold, "but what the d—— is a fellow to do? I don't see my way out of it. I think you 'd better go to Camperdown, and give them up to him, and tell him the truth." Then she sobbed more

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violently than before, till her quick ear caught the sound of a footstep on the stairs, and in a moment she was out of his arms and seated on the sofa, with hardly a trace of tears in her eyes. It was the footman, who desired to know whether Lady Eustace would want the carriage that afternoon. Lady Eustace, with her cheeriest voice, sent her love to Mrs. Carbuncle, and her assurance that she would not want the carriage before the evening. "I don't know that you can do anything else," continued Lord George, "except just give them up and brazen it out. I don't suppose they'd prosecute you."

"Prosecute me!" ejaculated Lizzie.

"For perjury, I mean."

"And what could they do to me?"

"Oh, I don't know. Lock you up for five years, perhaps."

"Because I had my own necklace under the pillow in my own room?"

"Think of all the trouble you've given."

"I'll never give them up to Mr. Camperdown. They are mine; my very own. My cousin, Mr. Greystock, who is much more of a lawyer than Mr. Camperdown, says so. Oh, George, do think of something. Don't tell me that I must give them up. Would n't Mr. Benjamin buy them?"

"Yes, for half nothing; and then go and tell the whole story and get money from the other side. You can't trust Benjamin."

"But I can trust you." She clung to him and implored him, and did get from him a renewed promise that he would not reveal her secret. She wanted him to take the terrible packet from her there and then,

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and use his own judgment in disposing of it. But this he positively refused to do. He protested that they were safer with her than they could be with him. He explained to her that if they were found in his hands, his offence in having them in his possession would be much greater than hers. They were her own, as she was ever so ready to assert; or if not her own, the ownership was so doubtful that she could not be accused of having stolen them. And then he needed to consider it all, to sleep upon it, before he could make up his mind what he would do.

But there was one other trouble on her mind as to which he was called upon to give her counsel before he was allowed to leave her. She had told the detective officer that she would submit her boxes and desks to be searched if her cousin Frank should advise it. If the policeman were to return with her cousin while the diamonds were still in her desk, what should she do? He might come at any time; and then she would be bound to obey him.

"And he thinks that they were stolen at Carlisle?" asked Lord George.

"Of course he thinks so," said Lizzie, almost indignantly.

"They would never ask to search your person," suggested Lord George. Lizzie could not say. She had simply declared that she would be guided by her cousin.

"Have them about you when he comes. Don't take them out with you; but keep them in your pocket while you are in the house during the day. They will hardly bring a woman with them to search you."

"But there was a woman with the man when he came before."

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"Then you must refuse in spite of your cousin. Show yourself angry with him and with everybody. Swear that you did not intend to submit yourself to such indignity as that. They can't do it without a magistrate's order, unless you permit it. I don't suppose they will come at all; and if they do they will only look at your clothes and your boxes. If they ask to do more, be stout with them and refuse. Of course, they'll suspect you, but they do that already. And your cousin will suspect you; but you must put up with that. It will be very bad; but I see nothing better. But, of all things, say nothing of me."

"Oh no," said Lizzie, promising to be obedient to him. And then he took his leave of her.

"You will be true to me, will you not?" she said, still clinging to his arm. He promised her that he would. "Oh, George," she said, "I have no friend now but you. You will care for me?" He took her in his arms and kissed her, and promised her that he would care for her. How was he to save himself from doing so? When he was gone, Lizzie sat down to think of it all, and felt sure that at last she had found her Corsair.

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CHAPTER LII.

MRS. CARBUNCLE GOES TO THE THEATRE.

MRS. CARBUNCLE and Lizzie Eustace did not, in these days, shut themselves up because there was trouble in the household. It would not have suited the creed of Mrs. Carbuncle on social matters to be shut up from the amusements of life. She had sacrificed too much in seeking them for that, and was too conscious of the price she paid for them. It was still mid-winter, but nevertheless there was generally some amusement arranged for every evening. Mrs. Carbuncle was very fond of the play, and made herself acquainted with every new piece as it came out. Every actor and actress of note on the stage was known to her, and she dealt freely in criticisms on their respective merits. The three ladies had a box at the Haymarket taken for this very evening, at which a new piece, "The Noble Jilt," from the hand of a very eminent author, was to be produced. Mrs. Carbuncle had talked a great deal about "The Noble Jilt," and could boast that she had discussed the merits of the two chief characters with the actor and actress who were to undertake them. Miss Talbot had assured her that the Margaret was altogether impracticable, and Mrs. Carbuncle was quite of the same opinion. And as for the hero, Steinmark, it was a part that no man could play so as to obtain the sympathy of an audience. There was

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a second hero, a Flemish Count, tame as rain-water, Mrs. Carbuncle said. She was very anxious for the success of the piece, which, as she said, had its merits; but she was sure that it would n't do. She had talked about it a great deal, and now, when the evening came, she was not going to be deterred from seeing it by any trouble in reference to a diamond necklace. Lizzie, when she was left by Lord George, had many doubts on the subject, whether she would go or stay at home. If he would have come to her, or her cousin Frank, or if, had it been possible, Lord Fawn would have come, she would have given up the play very willingly. But to be alone, with her necklace in the desk up-stairs, or in her pocket, was terrible to her. And then, they could not search her or her boxes while she was at the theatre. She must not take the necklace with her there. He had told her to leave it in her desk when she went from home.

Lucinda, also, was quite determined that she would see the new piece. She declared to her aunt, in Lizzie's presence, without a vestige of a smile, that it might be well to see how a jilt could behave herself, so as to do her work of jilting in any noble fashion.

"My dear," said her aunt, "you let things weigh upon your heart a great deal too much."

"Not upon my heart, Aunt Jane," the young lady had answered. She also intended to go, and when she had made up her mind to anything, nothing would deter her. She had no desire to stay at home in order that she might see Sir Griffin. "I dare say the play may be very bad," she said, "but it can hardly be so bad as real life."

Lizzie, when Lord George had left her, crept up-

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stairs, and sat for a while thinking of her condition, with the key of her desk in her hand. Should there come a knock at the door, the case of diamonds would be in her pocket in a moment. Her own room door was bolted on the inside, so that she might have an instant for her preparation. She was quite resolved that she would carry out Lord George's recommendation, and that no policeman or woman should examine her person, unless it were done by violence. There she sat, almost expecting that at every moment her cousin would be there with Bunfit and the woman. But nobody came, and at six she went down to dinner. After much consideration she then left the diamonds in the desk. Surely no one would come to search at such an hour as that. No one had come when the carriage was announced, and the three ladies went off together.

During the whole way Mrs. Carbuncle talked of the terrible situation in which poor Lord George was placed by the robbery, and of all that Lizzie owed him on account of his trouble.

"My dear," said Mrs. Carbuncle, "the least you can do for him is to give him all that you 've got to give."

"I don't know that he wants me to give him anything," said Lizzie.

"I think that 's quite plain," said Mrs. Carbuncle, "and I 'm sure I wish it may be so. He and I have been dear friends — very dear friends, and there is nothing I wish so much as to see him properly settled. Ill-natured people like to say all manner of things because everybody does not choose to live in their own heartless, conventional form. But I can assure you there is nothing between me and Lord George which

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need prevent him from giving his whole heart to you."

"I don't suppose there is," said Lizzie, who loved an opportunity of giving Mrs. Carbuncle a little rap.

The play, as a play, was a failure; at least so said Mrs. Carbuncle. The critics, on the next morning, were somewhat divided — not only in judgment, but as to facts. To say how a play has been received is of more moment than to speak of its own merits or of the merits of the actors. Three or four of the papers declared that the audience was not only eulogistic, but enthusiastic. One or two others averred that the piece fell very flatly. As it was not acted above four or five dozen times consecutively, it must be regarded as a failure. On their way home Mrs. Carbuncle declared that Minnie Talbot had done her very best with such a part as Margaret, but that the character afforded no scope for sympathy.

"A noble jilt, my dears," said Mrs. Carbuncle eloquently, "is a contradiction in terms. There can be no such thing. A woman, when she has once said the word, is bound to stick to it. The delicacy of the female character should not admit of hesitation between two men. The idea is quite revolting."

"But may not one have an idea of no man at all?" asked Lucinda. "Must that be revolting also?"

"Of course a young woman may entertain such an idea; though for my part I look upon it as unnatural. But when she has once given herself there can be no taking back without the loss of that aroma which should be the apple of a young woman's eye."

"If she finds that she has made a mistake — ?" said Lucinda fiercely. "Why should n't a young woman

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make a mistake as well as an old woman? Her aroma won't prevent her from having been wrong and finding it out."

"My dear, such mistakes, as you call them, always arise from fantastic notions. Look at this piece. Why does the lady jilt her lover? Not because she does n't like him. She 's just as fond of him as ever."

"He 's a stupid sort of a fellow, and I think she was quite right," said Lizzie. "I 'd never marry a man merely because I said I would. If I found I did n't like him, I 'd leave him at the altar. I 'd leave him any time I found I did n't like him. It 's all very well to talk of aroma, but to live with a man you don't like — is the devil."

"My dear, those whom God has joined together should n't be separated — for any mere likings or dislikings." This Mrs. Carbuncle said in a high tone of moral feeling, just as the carriage stopped at the door in Hertford street. They at once perceived that the hall-door was open, and Mrs. Carbuncle, as she crossed the pavement, saw that there were two policemen in the hall. The footman had been with them to the theatre, but the cook and housemaid, and Mrs. Carbuncle's own maid, were with the policemen in the passage. She gave a little scream, and then Lizzie, who had followed her, seized her by the arm. She turned round and saw by the gas-light that Lizzie's face was white as a sheet, and that all the lines of her countenance were rigid and almost distorted. "Then she does know all about it," said Mrs. Carbuncle to herself. Lizzie did n't speak, but still hung on to Mrs. Carbuncle's arm, and Lucinda, having seen how it was, was also supporting her.

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A policeman stepped forward and touched his hat. He was not Bunfit — neither was he Gager. Indeed, though the ladies had not perceived the difference, he was not at all like Bunfit or Gager. This man was dressed in a policeman's uniform, whereas Bunfit and Gager always wore plain clothes.

"My lady," said the policeman, addressing Mrs. Carbuncle, "there 's been a robbery here."

"A robbery!" ejaculated Mrs. Carbuncle.

"Yes, my lady. The servants all out, all to one; and she 's off. They 've taken jewels, and, no doubt, money, if there was any. They don't mostly come unless they know what they comes for."

With a horrid spasm across her heart, which seemed really to kill her, so sharp was the pain, Lizzie recovered the use of her legs and followed Mrs. Carbuncle into the dining-room. She had been hardly conscious of hearing; but she had heard, and it had seemed to her that the robbery spoken of was something distinct from her own affair. The policeman did not speak of having found the diamonds. It was of something lost that they spoke. She seated herself in a chair against the wall, but did not utter a word. "We 've been upstairs, my lady, and they 've been in most of the rooms. There 's a desk broke open." Lizzie gave an involuntary little scream. "Yes, mum, a desk," continued the policeman turning to Lizzie, "and a bureau, and a dressing-case. What 's gone your ladyship can tell when you sees. And one of the young women is off. It 's she as done it." Then the cook explained. She and the housemaid, and Mrs. Carbuncle's lady's maid, had just stepped out, only round the corner, to get a little air, leaving Patience Crabstick in charge of the house;

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and when they came back, the area gate was locked against them, the front door was locked, and finding themselves unable to get in after many knockings, they had at last obtained the assistance of a policeman. He had got into the place over the area gate, had opened the front door from within, and then the robbery had been discovered. It was afterwards found that the servants had all gone out to what they called a tea-party, at a public-house in the neighbourhood, and that by previous agreement Patience Crabstick had remained in charge. When they came back Patience Crabstick was gone, and the desk, and bureau, and dressing-case were found to have been opened. "She had a reg'lar thief along with her, my lady," said the policeman, still addressing himself to Mrs. Carbuncle, "'cause of the way the things was opened."

"I always knew that young woman was downright bad," said Mrs. Carbuncle in her first expression of wrath.

But Lizzie sat in her chair without saying a word, still pale with that almost awful look of agony in her face. Within ten minutes of their entering the house, Mrs. Carbuncle was making her way up-stairs, with the two policemen following her. That her bureau and her dressing-case should have been opened was dreadful to her, though the value that she could thus lose was very small. She also possessed diamonds, but her diamonds were paste; and whatever jewelry she had of any value, a few rings, and a brooch, and such like, had been on her person in the theatre. What little money she had by her was in the drawing-room, and the drawing-room, as it seemed, had not been entered. In truth, all Mrs. Carbuncle's possessions in the house

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were not sufficient to have tempted a well-bred, well-instructed thief. But it behooved her to be indignant; and she could be indignant with grace, as the thief was discovered to be, not her maid, but Patience Crabstick. The policemen followed Mrs. Carbuncle, and the maids followed the policemen; but Lizzie Eustace kept her seat in the chair by the wall. "Do you think they have taken much of yours?" said Lucinda, coming up to her and speaking very gently. Lizzie made a motion with her two hands upon her heart, and struggled, and gasped, as though she wished to speak but could not. "I suppose it is that girl who has done it all," said Lucinda. Lizzie nodded her head, and tried to smile. The attempt was so ghastly that Lucinda, though not timid by nature, was frightened. She sat down and took Lizzie's hand, and tried to comfort her. "It is very hard upon you," she said, "to be twice robbed." Lizzie again nodded her head. "I hope it is not much now. Shall we go up and see?" The poor creature did get upon her legs, but she gasped so terribly that Lucinda feared that she was dying. "Shall I send for some one?" she said. Lizzie made an effort to speak, was shaken convulsively while the other supported her, and then burst into a flood of tears.

When that had come she was relieved, and could again act her part. "Yes," she said, "we will go with them. It is so dreadful; is it not?"

"Very dreadful; but how much better that we were n't at home. Shall we go now?" Then together they followed the others, and on the stairs Lizzie explained that in her desk, of which she always carried the key round her neck, there was what money she

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had by her — two ten-pound notes, and four five-pound notes, and three sovereigns; in all, forty-three pounds. Her other jewels, the jewels which she had possessed over and above the fatal diamond necklace, were in her dressing-case. Patience, she did not doubt, had known that the money was there, and certainly knew of her jewels. So they went up-stairs. The desk was open and the money gone. Five or six rings and a bracelet had been taken also from Lizzie's dressing-case, which she had left open. Of Mrs. Carbuncle's property sufficient had been stolen to make a long list in that lady's handwriting. Lucinda Roanoke's room had not been entered, as far as they could judge. The girl had taken the best of her own clothes, and a pair of strong boots belonging to the cook. A superintendent of police was there before they went to bed, and a list was made out. The superintendent was of opinion that the thing had been done very cleverly, but also thought that the thieves had expected to find more plunder.

"They don't care so much about banknotes, my lady, because they fetches such a low price with them as they deal with. The three sovereigns is more to them than all the forty pounds in notes." The superintendent had heard of the diamond necklace, and expressed an opinion that poor Lady Eustace was especially marked out for misfortune.

"It all comes of having such a girl as that about her," said Mrs. Carbuncle. The superintendent, who intended to be consolatory to Lizzie, expressed his opinion that it was very hard to know what a young woman was.

"They looks as soft as butter, and they 're as sly as

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foxes, and as quick, as quick — as quick as greased lightning, my lady." Such a piece of business as this which has just occurred will make people intimate at a very short notice.

And so the diamond necklace, known to be worth ten thousand pounds, had at last been stolen in earnest! Lizzie, when the policemen were gone, and the noise was over, and the house was closed, slunk away to her bedroom, refusing any aid in lieu of that of the wicked Patience. She herself had examined the desk beneath the eyes of her two friends and of the policemen, and had seen at once that the case was gone. The money was gone too, as she was rejoiced to find. She perceived at once that had the money been left, the very leaving of it would have gone to prove that other prize had been there. But the money was gone — money of which she had given a correct account — and she could now honestly allege that she had been robbed. But she had at last really lost her great treasure; and if the treasure should be found then would she infallibly be exposed. She had talked twice of giving away her necklace, and had seriously thought of getting rid of it by burying it deep in the sea. But now that it was in very truth gone from her, the loss of it was horrible to her. Ten thousand pounds, for which she had struggled so much and borne so many things, which had come to be the prevailing fact of her life, gone from her forever! Nevertheless it was not that sorrow, that regret which had so nearly overpowered her in the dining-parlour. At that moment she hardly knew, had hardly thought, whether the diamonds had or had not been taken. But the feeling came upon her at once

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that her own disgrace was every hour being brought nearer to her. Her secret was no longer quite her own. One man knew it, and he had talked to her of perjury and of five years' imprisonment. Patience must have known it too; and now some one else also knew it. The police, of course, would find it out, and then horrid words would be used against her. She hardly knew what perjury was. It sounded like forgery and burglary. To stand up before a judge and be tried, and then to be locked up for five years in prison! What an end would this be to all her glorious success! And what evil had she done to merit all this terrible punishment? When they came to her in her bedroom at Carlisle she had simply been too much frightened to tell them all that the necklace was at that moment under her pillow.

She tried to think of it all, and to form some idea in her mind of what might be the truth. Of course Patience Crabstick had known her secret, but how long had the girl known it? And how had the girl discovered it? She was almost sure, from certain circumstances, from words which the girl had spoken, and from signs which she had observed, that Patience had not even suspected that the necklace had been brought with them from Carlisle to London. Of course the coming of Bunfit and the woman would have set the girl's mind to work in that direction; but then Bunfit and the woman had only been there on that morning. The Corsair knew the facts, and no one but the Corsair. That the Corsair was a Corsair the suspicions of the police had proved to her. She had offered the necklace to the Corsair; but when so offered he had refused to take it. She could under-

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stand that he should see the danger of accepting the diamonds from her hand, and yet should be desirous of having them. And might not he have thought that he could best relieve her from the burden of their custody in this manner? She felt no anger against the Corsair as she weighed the probability of his having taken them in this fashion. A Corsair must be a Corsair. Were he to come to her and confess the deed, she would almost like him the better for it, admiring his skill and enterprise. But how very clever he must have been, and how brave! He had known, no doubt, that the three ladies were all going to the theatre; but in how short a time had he got rid of the other women and availed himself of the services of Patience Crabstick!

But in what way would she conduct herself when the police should come to her on the following morning, the police and all the other people who would crowd to the house? How should she receive her cousin Frank? How should she look when the coincidence of the double robbery should be spoken of in her hearing? How should she bear herself when, as of course would be the case, she should again be taken before the magistrates, and made to swear as to the loss of her property? Must she commit more perjury, with the certainty that various people must know that her oath was false? All the world would suspect her. All the world would soon know the truth. Might it not be possible that the diamonds were at this moment in the hands of Messrs. Camperdown, and that they would be produced before her eyes, as soon as her second false oath had been registered against her? And yet how could she tell the truth? And what would the Corsair

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think of her, the Corsair who would know everything? She made one resolution during the night. She would not be taken into court. The magistrates and the people might come to her, but she would not go before them. When the morning came she said that she was ill, and refused to leave her bed. Policemen, she knew, were in the house early. At about nine Mrs. Carbuncle and Lucinda were up and in her room. The excitement of the affair had taken them from their beds, but she would not stir. If it were absolutely necessary, she said, the men must come into her room. She had been so overset by what had occurred on the previous night, that she could not leave her room. She appealed to Lucinda as to the fact of her illness. The trouble of these robberies was so great upon her that her heart was almost broken. If her deposition must be taken, she would make it in bed. In the course of the day the magistrate did come into her room and the deposition was taken. Forty-three pounds had been taken from her desk, and certain jewels, which she described, from her dressing-case. As far as she was aware, no other property of hers was missing. This she said in answer to a direct question from the magistrate, which, as she thought, was asked with a stern voice and searching eye. And so, a second time, she had sworn falsely. But this at least was gained, that Lord George de Bruce Carruthers was not looking at her as she swore.

Lord George was in the house for a great part of the day, but he did not ask to be admitted to Lizzie's room; nor did she ask to see him. Frank Greystock was there late in the afternoon, and went up at once to see his cousin. The moment that she saw him she stretched

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out her arms to him, and burst into tears. "My poor girl," said he, "what is the meaning of it all?"

"I don't know. I think they will kill me. They want to kill me. How can I bear it all? The robbers were here last night, and magistrates and policemen and people have been here all day." Then she fell into a fit of sobbing and wailing, which was, in truth, hysterical. For, if the readers think of it, the poor woman had a great deal to bear.

Frank, into whose mind no glimmer of suspicion against his cousin had yet entered, and who firmly believed that she had been made a victim because of the value of her diamonds, and who had a theory of his own about the robbery at Carlisle, to the circumstances of which he was now at some pains to make these latter circumstances adhere, was very tender with his cousin, and remained in the house for more than an hour. "Oh, Frank, what had I better do?" she asked him.

"I would leave London, if I were you."

"Yes; of course. I will. Oh yes, I will."

"If you don't fear the cold of Scotland ——"

"I fear nothing, nothing but being where these policemen can come to me. Oh!" and then she shuddered and was again hysterical. Nor was she acting the condition. As she remembered the magistrates, and the detectives, and the policemen in their uniforms, and reflected that she might probably see much more of them before the game was played out, the thoughts that crowded on her were almost more than she could bear.

"Your child is there, and it is your own house. Go there till all this passes by." Whereupon she promised

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him that, as soon as she was well enough, she would at once go to Scotland.

In the mean time, the Eustace diamonds were locked up in a small safe fixed into the wall at the back of a small cellar beneath the establishment of Messrs. Harter and Benjamin, in Minto Lane, in the City. Messrs. Harter and Benjamin always kept a second place of business. Their great shop was at the West End; but they had accommodation in the City.

The chronicler states this at once, as he scorns to keep from his reader any secret that is known to himself.

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CHAPTER LIII.

LIZZIE'S SICK-ROOM.

WHEN the Hertford street robbery was three days old, and was still the talk of all the town, Lizzie Eustace was really ill. She had promised to go down to Scotland in compliance with the advice given to her by her cousin Frank, and at the moment of promising would have been willing enough to be transported at once to Portray, had that been possible — so as to be beyond the visits of policemen and the authority of lawyers and magistrates; but as the hours passed over her head, and as her presence of mind returned to her, she remembered that even at Portray she would not be out of danger, and that she could do nothing in furtherance of her plans if once immured there. Lord George was in London, Frank Greystock was in London, and Lord Fawn was in London. It was more than ever necessary to her that she should find a husband among them, a husband who would not be less her husband when the truth of that business at Carlisle should be known to all the world. She had, in fact, stolen nothing. She endeavoured to comfort herself by repeating to herself over and over again that assurance. She had stolen nothing; and she still thought that if she could obtain the support of some strong arm on which to lean, she might escape punishment for those false oaths

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which she had sworn. Her husband might take her abroad, and the whole thing would die away. If she should succeed with Lord George, of course he would take her abroad, and there would be no need for any speedy return. They might roam among islands in pleasant warm suns, and the dreams of her youth might be realised. Her income was still her own. They could not touch that. So she thought, at least, oppressed by some slight want of assurance in that respect. Were she to go at once to Scotland, she must for the present give up that game altogether. If Frank would pledge himself to become her husband in three or four, or even in six months, she would go at once. She had more confidence in Frank than even in Lord George. As for love, she would sometimes tell herself that she was violently in love; but she hardly knew with which. Lord George was certainly the best representative of that perfect Corsair which her dreams had represented to her; but, in regard to working life, she thought that she liked her cousin Frank better than she had ever yet liked any other human being. But, in truth, she was now in that condition, as she acknowledged to herself, that she was hardly entitled to choose. Lord Fawn had promised to marry her, and to him as a husband she conceived that she still had a right. Nothing had as yet been proved against her which could justify him in repudiating his engagement. She had, no doubt, asserted with all vehemence to her cousin that no consideration would now induce her to give her hand to Lord Fawn; and when making that assurance she had been, after her nature, sincere. But circumstances were changed since that. She had not much hope that Lord Fawn might be made to suc-

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cumb, though evidence had reached her before the last robbery which induced her to believe that he did not consider himself to be quite secure. In these circumstances she was unwilling to leave London though she had promised, and was hardly sorry to find an excuse in her recognised illness.

And she was ill. Though her mind was again at work with schemes on which she would not have busied herself without hope, yet she had not recovered from the actual bodily prostration to which she had been compelled to give way when first told of the robbery on her return from the theatre. There had been moments then in which she thought that her heart would have broken; moments in which, but that the power of speech was wanting, she would have told everything to Lucinda Roanoke. When Mrs. Carbuncle was marching up-stairs with the policemen at her heels she would willingly have sold all her hopes, Portray Castle, her lovers, her necklace, her income, her beauty, for any assurance of the humblest security. With that quickness of intellect which was her peculiar gift, she had soon understood, in the midst of her sufferings, that her necklace had been taken by thieves whose robbery might assist her for a while in keeping her secret, rather than lead to the immediate divulging of it. Neither Camperdown nor Bunfit had been at work among the boxes. Her secret had been discovered, no doubt, by Patience Crabstick, and the diamonds were gone. But money also was taken, and the world need not know that the diamonds had been there. But Lord George knew. And then there arose to her that question: Had the diamonds been taken in consequence of that revelation to Lord George? It was not

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surprising that in the midst of all this Lizzie should be really ill.

She was most anxious to see Lord George; but, if what Mrs. Carbuncle said to her was true, Lord George refused to see her. She did not believe Mrs. Carbuncle, and was, therefore, quite in the dark about her Corsair. As she could only communicate with him through Mrs. Carbuncle, it might well be the case that he should have been told that he could not have access to her. Of course there were difficulties. That her cousin Frank should see her in her bedroom — her cousin Frank, with whom it was essentially necessary that she should hold counsel as to her present great difficulties — was a matter of course. There was no hesitation about that. A fresh nightcap, and a clean pocket handkerchief with a bit of lace round it, and perhaps some pretty covering to her shoulders if she were to be required to sit up in bed, and the thing was arranged. He might have spent the best part of his days in her bedroom if he could have spared the time. But the Corsair was not a cousin, nor as yet an acknowledged lover. There was difficulty even in framing a reason for her request, when she made it to Mrs. Carbuncle; and the very reason which she gave was handed back to her as the Corsair's reason for not coming to her. She desired to see him because he had been so mixed up in the matter of these terrible robberies. But Mrs. Carbuncle declared to her that Lord George would not come to her because his name had been so frequently mentioned in connection with the diamonds. "You see, my dear," said Mrs. Carbuncle, "there can be no real reason for his seeing you up in your bedroom. If there had been anything between you, as I once thought

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there would ——." There was something in the tone of Mrs. Carbuncle's voice which grated on Lizzie's ear, something which seemed to imply that all that prospect was over.

"Of course," said Lizzie querulously, "I am very anxious to know what he thinks. I care more about his opinion than anybody else's. As to his name being mixed up in it, that is all a joke."

"It has been no joke to him, I can assure you," said Mrs. Carbuncle. Lizzie could not press her request. Of course she knew more about it than did Mrs. Carbuncle. The secret was in her own bosom, the secret as to the midnight robbery at Carlisle, and that secret she had told to Lord George. As to the robbery in London she knew nothing, except that it had been perpetrated through the treachery of Patience Crabstick. Did Lord George know more about it than she knew? and if so, was he now deterred by that knowledge from visiting her? "You see, my dear," said Mrs. Carbuncle, "that a gentleman visiting a lady with whom he has no connection, in her bedroom, is in itself something very peculiar." Lizzie made a motion of impatience under the bedclothes. Any such argument was trash to her, and she knew that it was trash to Mrs. Carbuncle also. What was one man in her bedroom more than another? She could see a dozen doctors if she pleased, and if so, why not this man, whose real powers of doctoring her would be so much more efficacious? "You would want to see him alone, too," continued Mrs. Carbuncle, "and, of course, the police would hear of it. I am not at all surprised that he should stay away." Lizzie's condition did not admit of much argument on her side, and she only

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showed her opposition to Mrs. Carbuncle by being cross and querulous.

Frank Greystock came to her with great constancy almost every day, and from him she did hear about the robbery all that he knew or heard. When three days had passed, when six days, and even when ten days were gone, nobody had been as yet arrested. The police, according to Frank, were much on the alert, but were very secret. They either would not or could not tell anything. To him the two robberies, that at Carlisle and the last affair in Hertford street, were of course distinct. There were those who believed that the Hertford street thieves and the Carlisle thieves were not only the same, but that they had been in quest of the same plunder, and had at last succeeded. But Frank was not one of these. He never for a moment doubted that the diamonds had been taken at Carlisle, and explained the second robbery by the supposition that Patience Crabstick had been emboldened by success. The iron box had no doubt been taken by her assistance, and her familiarity with the thieves, then established, had led to the second robbery. Lizzie's loss in that second robbery had amounted to some hundred pounds. This was Frank Greystock's theory, and of course it was one very comfortable to Lizzie.

"They all seem to think that the diamonds are at Paris," he said to her one day.

"If you only knew how little I care about them! It seems as though I had almost forgotten them in these after troubles."

"Mr. Camperdown cares about them. I'm told he says that he can make you pay for them out of your jointure."

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"That would be very terrible, of course," said Lizzie, to whose mind there was something consolatory in the idea that the whole affair of the robbery might perhaps remain so mysterious as to remove her from the danger of other punishment than this.

"I feel sure that he could n't do it," said Frank, "and I don't think he 'll try it. John Eustace would not let him. It would be persecution."

"Mr. Camperdown has always chosen to persecute me," said Lizzie.

"I can understand that he should n't like the loss of the diamonds. I don't think, Lizzie, you ever realised their true value."

"I suppose not. After all, a necklace is only a necklace. I cared nothing for it — except that I could not bear the idea that that man should dictate to me. I would have given it up at once, at the slightest word from you." He did not care to remind her then, as she lay in bed, that he had been very urgent in his advice to her to abandon the diamonds; and not the less urgent because he had thought that the demand for them was unjust. "I told you often," she continued, "that I was tempted to throw them among the waves. It was true, quite true. I offered to give them to you, and should have been delighted to have been relieved from them."

"That was of course simply impossible."

"I know it was impossible on your part; but I would have been delighted. Of what use were they to me? I wore them twice because that man" — meaning Lord Fawn — "disputed my right to them. Before that I never even looked at them. Do you think I had pleasure in wearing them, or pleasure in looking at them?

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Never. They were only a trouble to me. It was a point of honour with me to keep them, because I was attacked. But I am glad they are gone — thoroughly glad." This was all very well, and was not without its effect on Frank Greystock. It is hardly expected of a woman in such a condition, with so many troubles on her mind, who had been so persecuted, that every word uttered by her should be strictly true. Lizzie with her fresh nightcap and her lace handkerchief, pale, and with her eyes just glittering with tears, was very pretty.

"Did n't somebody once give some one a garment which scorched him up when he wore it — some woman who sent it because she loved the man so much?"

"The shirt, you mean, which Deianira sent to Hercules. Yes, Hercules was a good deal scorched."

"And that necklace, which my husband gave me because he loved me so well, has scorched me horribly. It has nearly killed me. It has been like the white elephant which the Eastern king gives to his subject when he means to ruin him. Only poor Florian did n't mean to hurt me. He gave it all in love. If these people bring a lawsuit against me, Frank, you must manage it for me."

"There will be no lawsuit. Your brother-in-law will stop it."

"I wonder who will really get the diamonds after all, Frank? They were very valuable. Only think that the ten thousand pounds should disappear in such a way!" The subject was a very dangerous one, but there was a fascination about it which made it impossible for her to refrain from it.

"A dishonest dealer in diamonds will probably realise the plunder — after some years. There would be

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something very alluring in the theft of articles of great value, were it not that, when got, they at once become almost valueless by the difficulty of dealing with them. Supposing I had the necklace!"

"I wish you had, Frank."

"I could do nothing with it. Ten sovereigns would go further with me — or ten shillings. The burden of possessing it would in itself be almost more than I could bear. The knowledge that I had the thing, and might be discovered in having it, would drive me mad. By my own weakness I should be compelled to tell my secret to some one. And then I should never sleep for fear my partner in the matter should turn against me." How well she understood it all! How probable it was that Lord George should turn against her! How exact was Frank's description of that burden of a secret so heavy that it cannot be borne alone! "A little reflection," continued Frank, "soon convinces a man that rough downright stealing is an awkward, foolish trade; and it therefore falls into the hands of those who want education for the higher efforts of dishonesty. To get into a bank at midnight and steal what little there may be in the till, or even an armful of banknotes, with the probability of a policeman catching you as you creep out of the chimney and through a hole, is clumsy work; but to walk in amidst the smiles and bows of admiring managers and draw out money over the counter by thousands and tens of thousands, which you have never put in and which you can never repay, and which, when all is done, you have only borrowed — that is a great feat."

"Do you really think so?"

"The courage, the ingenuity, and the self-confidence

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heeded are certainly admirable. And then there is a cringing and almost contemptible littleness about honesty, which hardly allows it to assert itself. The really honest man can never say a word to make those who don't know of his honesty believe that it is there. He has one foot in the grave before his neighbours have learned that he is possessed of an article for the use of which they would so willingly have paid, could they have been made to see that it was there. The dishonest man almost doubts whether in him dishonesty is dishonest, let it be practised ever so widely. The honest man almost doubts whether his honesty be honest, unless it be kept hidden. Let two unknown men be competitors for any place, with nothing to guide the judges but their own words and their own looks, and who can doubt but the dishonest man would be chosen rather than the honest? Honesty goes about with a hang-dog look about him, as though knowing that he cannot be trusted till he be proved. Dishonesty carries his eyes high, and assumes that any question respecting him must be considered to be unnecessary."

"Oh, Frank, what a philosopher you are."

"Well, yes; meditating about your diamonds has brought my philosophy out. When do you think you will go to Scotland?"

"I am hardly strong enough for the journey yet. I fear the cold so much."

"You would not find it cold there by the seaside. To tell you the truth, Lizzie, I want to get you out of this house. I don't mean to say a word against Mrs. Carbuncle; but after all that has occurred, it would be better that you should be away. People talk about you and Lord George."

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"How can I help it, Frank?"

"By going away — that is, if I may presume one thing. I don't want to pry into your secrets."

"I have none from you."

"Unless there be truth in the assertion that you are engaged to marry Lord George Carruthers."

"There is no truth in it."

"And you do not wish to stay here in order that there may be an engagement? I am obliged to ask you home questions, Lizzie, as I could not otherwise advise you."

"You do, indeed, ask home questions."

"I will desist at once, if they be disagreeable."

"Frank, you are false to me." As she said this she rose in her bed, and sat with her eyes fixed upon his, and her thin hands stretched out upon the bedclothes. "You know that I cannot wish to be engaged to him or to any other man. You know, better almost than I can know myself, how my heart stands. There has, at any rate, been no hypocrisy with me in regard to you. Everything has been told to you — at what cost I will not now say. The honest woman, I fear, fares worse even than the honest man of whom you spoke. I think you admitted that he would be appreciated at last. She to her dying day must pay the penalty of her transgressions. Honesty in a woman the world never forgives." When she had done speaking, he sat silent by her bedside, but, almost unconsciously, he stretched out his left hand and took her right hand in his. For a few seconds she admitted this, and she lay there with their hands clasped. Then with a start she drew back her arm, and retreated as it were from his touch. "How dare you," said she, "press my hand when you know that such pressure from you is treacherous and damnable?"

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"Damnable, Lizzie!"

"Yes — damnable. I will not pick my words for you. Coming from you, what does such pressure mean?"

"Affection."

"Yes — and of what sort? You are wicked enough to feed my love by such tokens, when you know that you do not mean to return it. Oh, Frank, Frank, will you give me back my heart? What was it that you promised me when we sat together upon the rocks at Portray?"

It is inexpressibly difficult for a man to refuse the tender of a woman's love. We may almost say that a man should do so as a matter of course — that the thing so offered becomes absolutely valueless by the offer — that the woman who can make it has put herself out of court by her own abandonment of privileges due to her as a woman — that stern rebuke and even expressed contempt are justified by such conduct — and that the fairest beauty and most alluring charms of feminine grace should lose their attraction when thus tendered openly in the market. No doubt such is our theory as to love and lovemaking. But the action to be taken by us in matters as to which the plainest theory prevails for the guidance of our practice, depends so frequently on accompanying circumstances and correlative issues, that the theory, as often as not, falls to the ground. Frank could not despise this woman, and could not be stern to her. He could not bring himself to tell her boldly that he would have nothing to say to her in the way of love. He made excuses for her, and persuaded himself that there were peculiar circumstances in her position justifying unwomanly conduct, although, had he examined himself on

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the subject, he would have found it difficult to say what those circumstances were. She was rich, beautiful, clever — and he was flattered. Nevertheless he knew that he could not marry her; and he knew also that much as he liked her he did not love her. "Lizzie," he said, "I think you hardly understand my position."

"Yes, I do. That little girl has cozened you out of a promise."

"If it be so, you would not have me break it?"

"Yes, I would, if you think she is not fit to be your wife. Is a man, such as you are, to be tied by the leg for life, have all his ambition clipped, and his high hopes shipwrecked, because a girl has been clever enough to extract a word from him? Is it not true that you are in debt?"

"What of that? At any rate, Lizzie, I do not want help from you."

"That is so like a man's pride! Do we not all know that in such a career as you have marked out for yourself, wealth, or at any rate an easy income, is necessary? Do you think that I cannot put two and two together? Do you believe so meanly of me as to imagine that I should have said to you what I have said, if I did not know that I could help you? A man, I believe, cannot understand that love which induces a woman to sacrifice her pride simply for his advantage. I want to see you prosper. I want to see you a great man and a lord, and I know that you cannot become so without an income. Ah, I wish I could give you all that I have got, and save you from the encumbrance that is attached to it!"

It might be that he would then have told her of his

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engagement to Lucy, and of his resolution to adhere to that promise, had not Mrs. Carbuncle at that moment entered the room. Frank had been there for above an hour, and as Lizzie was still an invalid, and to some extent under the care of Mrs. Carbuncle, it was natural that that lady should interfere. "You know, my dear, you should not exhaust yourself altogether. Mr. Emilius is to come to you this afternoon."

"Mr. Emilius!" said Greystock.

"Yes — the clergyman. Don't you remember him at Portray? A dark man with eyes close together! You used to be very wicked, and say that he was once a Jew boy in the streets." Lizzie, as she spoke of her spiritual guide, was evidently not desirous of doing him much honour.

"I remember him well enough. He made sheep's eyes at Miss Macnulty, and drank a great deal of wine at dinner."

"Poor Macnulty! I don't believe a word about the wine; and as for Macnulty, I don't see why she should not be converted as well as another. He is coming here to read to me. I hope you don't object."

"Not in the least — if you like it."

"One does have solemn thoughts sometimes, Frank — especially when one is ill."

"Oh, yes. Well or ill, one does have solemn thoughts — ghosts, as it were, which will appear. But is Mr. Emilius good at laying such apparitions?"

"He is a clergyman, Mr. Greystock," said Mrs. Carbuncle, with something of rebuke in her voice.

"So they tell me. I was not present at his ordination, but I dare say it was done according to rule. When one reflects what a deal of harm a bishop may

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do, one wishes that there was some surer way of getting bishops."

"Do you know anything against Mr. Emilius?" asked Lizzie.

"Nothing at all but his looks, and manners, and voice, unless it be that he preaches popular sermons, and drinks too much wine, and makes sheep's eyes at Miss Macnulty. Look after your silver spoons, Mrs. Carbuncle, if the last thieves have left you any. You were asking after the fate of your diamonds, Lizzie. Perhaps they will endow a Protestant church in Mr. Emilius's native land."

Mr. Emilius did come and read to Lady Eustace that afternoon. A clergyman is as privileged to enter the bedroom of a sick lady as is a doctor or a cousin. There was another clean cap, and another laced handkerchief, and on this occasion a little shawl over Lizzie's shoulders. Mr. Emilius first said a prayer, kneeling at Lizzie's bedside; then he read a chapter in the Bible; and after that he read the first half of the fourth canto of Childe Harold so well, that Lizzie felt for the moment that after all poetry was life, and life was poetry.

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CHAPTER LIV.

"I SUPPOSE I MAY SAY A WORD."

THE second robbery to which Lady Eustace had been subjected by no means decreased the interest which was attached to her and her concerns in the fashionable world. Parliament had now met, and the party at Matching Priory, Lady Glencora Palliser's party in the country, had been to some extent broken up. All those gentlemen who were engaged in the service of Her Majesty's Government had necessarily gone to London, and they who had wives at Matching had taken their wives with them. Mr. and Mrs. Bonteen had seen the last of their holiday; Mr. Palliser himself was, of course, at his post; and all the private secretaries were with the public secretaries on the scene of action. On the 13th of February Mr. Palliser made his first great statement in Parliament on the matter of the five-farthinged penny, and pledged himself to do his very best to carry that stupendous measure through Parliament in the present session. The City men who were in the House that night, and all the directors of the Bank of England, were in the gallery, and every chairman of a great banking company, and every Baring and every Rothschild, if there be Barings and Rothschilds who have not been returned by constituencies, and have not seats in the House by right, agreed in declaring that the job in hand was too much for any

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one member or any one session. Some said that such a measure never could be passed, because the unfinished work of one session could not be used in lessenening the labours of the next. Everything must be recommenced; and therefore, so said these hopeless ones, the penny with five farthings, the penny of which a hundred would make ten shillings, the halcyon penny, which would make all future pecuniary calculations easy to the meanest British capacity, could never become the law of the land. Others, more hopeful, were willing to believe that gradually the thing would so sink into the minds of members of Parliament, of writers of leading articles, and of the active public generally, as to admit of certain established axioms being taken as established, and placed, as it were, beyond the procrastinating power of debate. It might, for instance, at last be taken for granted that a decimal system was desirable, so that a month or two of the spring need not be consumed on that preliminary question. But this period had not as yet been reached, and it was thought by the entire City that Mr. Palliser was much too sanguine. It was so probable, many said, that he might kill himself by labour which would be Herculean in all but success, and that no financier after him would venture to face the task. It behooved Lady Glencora to see that her Hercules did not kill himself.

In this state of affairs Lady Glencora, into whose hands the custody of Mr. Palliser's uncle, the duke, had now altogether fallen, had a divided duty between Matching and London. When the members of Parliament went up to London, she went there also, leaving some half-dozen friends whom she could trust to amuse the duke; but she soon returned, knowing that there

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might be danger in a long absence. The duke, though old, was his own master; he much affected the company of Madame Goesler, and that lady's kindness to him was considerate and incessant; but there might still be danger, and Lady Glencora felt that she was responsible that the old nobleman should do nothing, in the feebleness of age, to derogate from the splendour of his past life. What if some day his grace should be off to Paris and insist on making Madame Goesler a duchess in the chapel of the Embassy? Madame Goesler had hitherto behaved very well; would probably continue to behave well. Lady Glencora really loved Madame Goesler. But then the interests at stake were very great! So circumstanced, Lady Glencora found herself compelled to be often on the road between Matching and London.

But though she was burthened with great care, Lady Glencora by no means dropped her interest in the Eustace diamonds; and when she learned that on the top of the great Carlisle robbery a second robbery had been superadded, and that this had been achieved while all the London police were yet astray about the former operation, her solicitude was of course enhanced. The duke himself, too, took the matter up so strongly that he almost wanted to be carried up to London, with some view, as it was supposed by the ladies who were so good to him, of seeing Lady Eustace personally.

"It's out of the question, my dear," Lady Glencora said to Madame Goesler, when the duke's fancy was first mentioned to her by that lady.

"I told him that the trouble would be too much for him."

"Of course it would be too much," said Lady Glen-

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cora. "It is quite out of the question." Then after a moment she added in a whisper, "Who knows but what he 'd insist on marrying her? It is n't every woman that can resist temptation." Madame Goesler smiled and shook her head, but made no answer to Lady Glencora's suggestion. Lady Glencora assured her uncle that everything should be told to him. She would write about it daily, and send him the latest news by the wires if the post should be too slow.

"Ah, yes," said the duke. "I like telegrams best. I think, you know, that that Lord George Carruthers had had something to do with it. Don't you, Madame Goesler?" It had long been evident that the duke was anxious that one of his own order should be proved to have been the thief, as the plunder taken was so lordly.

In regard to Lizzie herself, Lady Glencora, on her return to London, took it into her head to make a diversion in our heroine's favour. It had hitherto been a matter of faith with all the liberal party that Lady Eustace had had something to do with stealing her own diamonds. That *esprit de corps*, which is the glorious characteristic of English statesmen, had caused the whole Government to support Lord Fawn, and Lord Fawn could only be supported on the supposition that Lizzie Eustace had been a wicked culprit. But Lady Glencora, though very true as a politician, was apt to have opinions of her own, and to take certain flights in which she chose that others of the party should follow her. She now expressed an opinion that Lady Eustace was a victim, and all the Mrs. Bonteens, with some even of the Mr. Bonteens, found themselves compelled to agree with her. She stood too high among her set

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to be subject to that obedience which restrained others; too high, also, for others to resist her leading. As a member of a party she was erratic and dangerous, but from her position and peculiar temperament she was powerful. When she declared that poor Lady Eustace was a victim, others were obliged to say so too. This was particularly hard upon Lord Fawn, and the more so as Lady Glencora took upon her to assert that Lord Fawn had no right to jilt the young woman. And Lady Glencora had this to support her views — that for the last week past, indeed ever since the depositions which had been taken after the robbery in Hertford street, the police had expressed no fresh suspicions in regard to Lizzie Eustace. She heard daily from Barrington Erle that Major Mackintosh and Bunfit and Gager were as active as ever in their inquiries, that all Scotland Yard was determined to unravel the mystery, and that there were emissaries at work tracking the diamonds at Hamburg, Paris, Vienna, and New York. It had been whispered to Mr. Erle that the whereabouts of Patience Crabstick had been discovered, and that many of the leading thieves in London were assisting the police; but nothing more was done in the way of fixing any guilt upon Lizzie Eustace. "Upon my word, I am beginning to think that she has been more sinned against than sinning." This was said to Lady Glencora on the morning after Mr. Palliser's great speech about the five farthings, by Barrington Erle, who, as it seemed, had been specially told off by the party to watch this investigation.

"I am sure she has had nothing to do with it. I have thought so ever since the last robbery. Sir Simon Slope told me yesterday afternoon that Mr. Camper-

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down has given it up altogether." Sir Simon Slope was the Solicitor-General of that day.

"It would be absurd for him to go on with his bill in Chancery now that the diamonds are gone, unless he meant to make her pay for them."

"That would be rank persecution. Indeed, she has been persecuted. I shall call upon her." Then she wrote the following letter to the duke: —

"FEBRUARY 14, 18—.

"MY DEAR DUKE: Plantagenet was on his legs last night for three hours and three-quarters, and I sat through it all. As far as I could observe through the bars I was the only person in the House who listened to him. I 'm sure Mr. Gresham was fast asleep. It was quite piteous to see some of them yawning. Plantagenet did it very well, and I almost think I understood him. They seem to say that nobody on the other side will take trouble enough to make a regular opposition, but there are men in the City who will write letters to the newspapers, and get up a sort of Bank clamour. Plantagenet says nothing about it, but there is a do-or-die manner with him which is quite tragical. The House was up at eleven, when he came home and eat three oysters, drank a glass of beer, and slept well. They say the real work will come when it 's in Committee; that is, if it gets there. The bill is to be brought in, and will be read the first time next Monday week.

"As to the robberies, I believe there is no doubt that the police have got hold of the young woman. They don't arrest her, but deal with her in a friendly sort of way. Barrington Erle says that a sergeant is

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to marry her in order to make quite sure of her. I suppose they know their business; but that would n't strike me as being the safest way. They seem to think the diamonds went to Paris, but have since been sent on to New York.

"As to the little widow, I do believe she has been made a victim. She first lost her diamonds, and now her other jewels and her money have gone. I cannot see what she was to gain by treachery, and I think she has been ill-used. She is staying at the house of that Mrs. Carbuncle, but all the same I shall go and call on her. I wish you could see her, because she is such a little beauty, just what you would like; not so much colour as our friend, but perfect features, with infinite play, not perhaps always in the best taste; but then we can't have everything, can we, dear duke?

"As to the real thief — of course you must burn this at once, and keep it strictly private as coming from me — I fancy that delightful Scotch lord managed it entirely. The idea is, that he did it on commisson for the Jew jewellers. I don't suppose he had money enough to carry it out himself. As to the second robbery, whether he had or had not a hand in that, I can't make up my mind. I don't see why he should n't. If a man does go into a business, he ought to make the best of it. Of course it was a poor thing after the diamonds; but still it was worth having. There is some story about a Sir Griffin Tewett. He 's a real Sir Griffin, as you 'll find by the peerage. He was to marry a young woman, and our Lord George insists that he shall marry her. I don't understand all about it, but the girl lives in the same house with Lady Eustace, and if I call I shall find out. They say that Sir

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Griffin knows all about the necklace, and threatens to tell unless he is let off marrying. I rather think the girl is Lord George's daughter, so that there is a thorough complication.

"I shall go down to Matching on Saturday. If anything turns up before that, I 'll write again, or send a message. I don't know whether Plantagenet will be able to leave London. He says he must be back on Monday, and that he loses too much time on the road. Kiss my little darlings for me," — the darlings were Lady Glencora's children, and the duke's playthings, — "and give my love to Madame Max. I suppose you don't see much of the others.

"Most affectionately yours,

"GLENCORA."

On the next day Lady Glencora actually did call in Hertford street and saw our friend Lizzie. She was told by the servant that Lady Eustace was in bed; but, with her usual persistence, she asked questions, and when she found that Lizzie did receive visitors in her room, she sent up her card. The compliment was one much too great to be refused. Lady Glencora stood so high in the world, that her countenance would be almost as valuable as another lover. If Lord George would keep her secret, and Lady Glencora would be her friend, might she not still be a successful woman? So Lady Glencora Palliser was shown up to Lizzie's chamber. Lizzie was found with her nicest nightcap and prettiest handkerchief, with a volume of Tennyson's poetry, and a scent-bottle. She knew that it behooved her to be very clever at this interview. Her instinct told her that her first greeting should

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show more of surprise than of gratification. Accordingly, in a pretty, feminine, almost childish way, she was very much surprised. "I 'm doing the strangest thing in the world, I know, Lady Eustace," said Lady Glencora with a smile.

"I 'm sure you mean to do a kind thing."

"Well, yes, I do. I think we have not met since you were at my house near the end of last season."

"No, indeed. I have been in London six weeks, but have not been out much. For the last fortnight I have been in bed. I have had things to trouble me so much that they have made me ill."

"So I have heard, Lady Eustace, and I have just come to offer you my sympathy. When I was told that you did see people, I thought that perhaps you would admit me."

"So willingly, Lady Glencora!"

"I have heard, of course, of your terrible losses."

"The loss has been as nothing to the vexation that has accompanied it. I don't know how to speak of it. Ladies have lost their jewels before now, but I don't know that any lady before me has ever been accused of stealing them herself."

"There has been no accusation, surely?"

"I have n't exactly been put in prison, Lady Glencora, but I have had policemen here wanting to search my things; and then you know yourself what reports have been spread."

"Oh, yes, I do. Only for that, to tell you plainly, I should hardly have been here now." Then Lady Glencora poured out her sympathy — perhaps with more eloquence and grace than discretion. She was, at any rate, both graceful and eloquent. "As for the loss of

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the diamonds, I think you bear it wonderfully," said Lady Glencora.

"If you could imagine how little I care about it!" said Lizzie with enthusiasm. "They had lost the delight which I used to feel in them as a present from my husband. People had talked about them, and I had been threatened because I chose to keep what I knew to be my own. Of course I would not give them up. Would you have given them up, Lady Glencora?"

"Certainly not."

"Nor would I. But when once all that had begun, they became an irrepressible burden to me. I often used to say that I would throw them into the sea."

"I don't think I would have done that," said Lady Glencora.

"Ah — you have never suffered as I have suffered."

"We never know where each other's shoes pinch each other's toes."

"You have never been left desolate. You have a husband and friends."

"A husband that wants to put five farthings into a penny! All is not gold that glistens, Lady Eustace."

"You can never have known trials such as mine," continued Lizzie, not understanding in the least her new friend's allusion to the great currency question. "Perhaps you may have heard that in the course of last summer I became engaged to marry a nobleman, with whom I am aware that you are acquainted." This she said in her softest whisper.

"Oh, yes — Lord Fawn. I know him very well. Of course I heard of it. We all heard of it."

"And you have heard how he has treated me?"

"Yes — indeed."

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"I will say nothing about him — to you, Lady Glencora. It would not be proper that I should do so. But all that came of this wretched necklace. After that, can you wonder that I should say that I wish these stones had been thrown into the sea?"

"I suppose Lord Fawn will — will come all right again now?" said Lady Glencora.

"All right!" exclaimed Lizzie in astonishment.

"His objection to the marriage will now be over."

"I 'm sure I do not in the least know what are his lordship's views," said Lizzie in scorn, "and, to tell the truth, I do not very much care."

"What I mean is, that he did n't like you to have the Eustace diamonds ——"

"They were not Eustace diamonds. They were my diamonds."

"But he did not like you to have them; and as they are now gone — forever ——"

"Oh, yes, they are gone forever."

"His objection is gone too. Why don't you write to him, and make him come and see you? That 's what I should do."

Lizzie, of course, repudiated vehemently any idea of forcing Lord Fawn into a marriage which had become distasteful to him — let the reason be what it might.

"His lordship is perfectly free, as far as I am concerned," said Lizzie with a little show of anger. But all this Lady Glencora took at its worth. Lizzie Eustace had been a good deal knocked about, and Lady Glencora did not doubt but that she would be very glad to get back her betrothed husband. The little woman had suffered hardships, so thought Lady Glencora — and a good thing would be done by bring-

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ing her into fashion, and setting the marriage up again. As to Lord Fawn — the fortune was there, as good now as it had been when he first sought it; and the lady was very pretty, a baronet's widow too — and in all respects good enough for Lord Fawn. A very pretty little baronet's widow she was, with four thousand a year, and a house in Scotland, and a history. Lady Glencora determined that she would remake the match.

"I think, you know, friends who have been friends should be brought together. I suppose I may say a word to Lord Fawn?"

Lizzie hesitated for a moment before she answered, and then remembered that revenge, at least, would be sweet to her. She had sworn that she would be revenged upon Lord Fawn. After all, might it not suit her best to carry out her oath by marrying him? But whether so or otherwise, it could not but be well for her that he should be again at her feet. "Yes, if you think good will come of it." The acquiescence was given with much hesitation; but the circumstances required that it should be so, and Lady Glencora fully understood the circumstances. When she took her leave, Lizzie was profuse in her gratitude. "Oh, Lady Glencora, it has been so good of you to come. Pray come again, if you can spare me another moment." Lady Glencora said that she would come again.

During the visit she had asked some question concerning Lucinda and Sir Griffin, and had been informed that that marriage was to go on. A hint had been thrown out as to Lucinda's parentage; but Lizzie had not understood the hint, and the question had not been pressed.

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CHAPTER LV.

QUINTS OR SEMITENTHS.

THE task which Lady Glencora had taken upon herself was not a very easy one. No doubt Lord Fawn was a man subservient to the leaders of his party, much afraid of the hard judgment of those with whom he was concerned, painfully open to impression from what he would have called public opinion, to a certain extent a coward, most anxious to do right so that he might not be accused of being in the wrong, and at the same time gifted with but little of that insight into things which teaches men to know what is right and what is wrong. Lady Glencora, having perceived all this, felt that he was a man upon whom a few words from her might have an effect. But even Lady Glencora might hesitate to tell a gentleman that he ought to marry a lady, when the gentleman had already declared his intention of not marrying and had attempted to justify his decision almost publicly by a reference to the lady's conduct! Lady Glencora almost felt that she had undertaken too much as she turned over in her mind the means she had of performing her promise to Lady Eustace.

The five-farthing bill had been laid upon the table on a Tuesday, and was to be read the first time on the following Monday week. On the Wednesday Lady Glencora had written to the duke, and had called in

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Hertford street. On the following Sunday she was at Matching, looking after the duke; but she returned to London on the Tuesday, and on the Wednesday there was a little dinner at Mr. Palliser's house, given avowedly with the object of further friendly discussion respecting the new Palliser penny. The prime minister was to be there, and Mr. Bonteen, and Barrington Erle, and those special members of the Government who would be available for giving special help to the financial Hercules of the day. A question, perhaps of no great practical importance, had occurred to Mr. Palliser, but one which, if overlooked, might be fatal to the ultimate success of the measure. There is so much in a name, and then an ounce of ridicule is often more potent than a hundredweight of argument. By what denomination should the fifth part of a penny be hereafter known? Some one had, ill-naturedly, whispered to Mr. Palliser that a farthing meant a fourth, and at once there arose a new trouble, which for a time bore very heavily on him. Should he boldly disregard the original meaning of the useful old word; or should he venture on the dangers of new nomenclature? October, as he said to himself, is still the tenth month of the year, November the eleventh, and so on, though by these names they are so plainly called the eighth and ninth. All France tried to rid itself of this absurdity and failed. Should he stick by the farthing; or should he call it a fifthing, a quint, or a semitenth? "There 's the 'Fortnightly Review' comes out but once a month," he said to his friend Mr. Bonteen, "and I 'm told that it does very well." Mr. Bonteen, who was a rational man, thought the "Review" would do better if it were called by a more rational name, and was very

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much in favour of "a quint." Mr. Gresham had expressed an opinion, somewhat off hand, that English people would never be got to talk about quints, and so there was a difficulty. A little dinner was therefore arranged, and Mr. Palliser, as was his custom in such matters, put the affair of the dinner into his wife's hands. When he was told that she had included Lord Fawn among the guests he opened his eyes. Lord Fawn, who might be good enough at the India Office, knew literally nothing about the penny.

"He 'll take it as the greatest compliment in the world," said Lady Glencora.

"I don't want to pay Lord Fawn a compliment," said Mr. Palliser.

"But I do," said Lady Glencora. And so the matter was arranged.

It was a very nice little dinner. Mrs. Gresham and Mrs. Bonteen were there, and the great question of the day was settled in two minutes, before the guests went out of the drawing-room.

"Stick to your farthing," said Mr. Gresham.

"I think so," said Mr. Palliser.

"Quint 's a very easy word," said Mr. Bonteen.

"But squint is an easier," said Mr. Gresham, with all a prime minister's jocose authority.

"They 'd certainly be called cock-eyes," said Barrington Erle.

"There 's nothing of the sound of a quarter in farthing," said Mr. Palliser.

"Stick to the old word," said Mr. Gresham. And so the matter was decided while Lady Glencora was flattering Lord Fawn as to the manner in which he had finally arranged the affair of the Sawab of Mygawb.

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Then they went down to dinner, and not a word more was said that evening about the new penny by Mr. Palliser.

Before dinner Lady Glencora had exacted a promise from Lord Fawn that he would return to the drawing-room. Lady Glencora was very clever at such work, and said nothing then of her purpose. She did not want her guests to run away, and therefore Lord Fawn — Lord Fawn especially — must stay. If he were to go there would be nothing spoken of all the evening, but that weary new penny. To oblige her he must remain; and, of course, he did remain. "Whom do you think I saw the other day?" said Lady Glencora, when she got her victim into a corner. Of course Lord Fawn had no idea whom she might have seen. Up to that moment no suspicion of what was coming upon him had crossed his mind. "I called upon poor Lady Eustace and found her in bed." Then did Lord Fawn blush up to the roots of his hair, and for a moment he was stricken dumb. "I do feel for her so much! I think she has been so hardly used!"

He was obliged to say something. "My name has of course been much mixed up with hers."

"Yes, Lord Fawn, I know it has. And it is because I am so sure of your high-minded generosity and — and thorough devotion, that I have ventured to speak to you. I am sure there is nothing you would wish so much as to get at the truth."

"Certainly, Lady Glencora."

"All manner of stories have been told about her, and, as I believe, without the slightest foundation. They tell me now that she had an undoubted right to keep the diamonds; that even if Sir Florian did not

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give them to her, they were hers under his will. Those lawyers have given up all idea of proceeding against her."

"Because the necklace has been stolen."

"Altogether independently of that. Do you see Mr. Eustace, and ask him if what I say is not true. If it had not been her own she would have been responsible for the value, even though it were stolen; and with such a fortune as hers they would never have allowed her to escape. They were as bitter against her as they could be; were n't they?"

"Mr. Camperdown thought that the property should be given up."

"Oh yes; that 's the man's name; a horrid man. I am told that he was really most cruel to her. And then, because a lot of thieves had got about her — after the diamonds, you know, like flies round a honey-pot — and took first her necklace and then her money, they were impudent enough to say that she had stolen her own things!"

"I don't think they quite said that, Lady Glencora."

"Something very much like it, Lord Fawn. I have no doubt in my own mind who did steal all the things."

"Who was it?"

"Oh, one must n't mention names in such an affair without evidence. At any rate she has been very badly treated, and I shall take her up. If I were you I would go and call upon her. I would indeed. I think you owe it to her. Well, duke, what do you think of Plantagenet's penny now? Will it ever be worth two half-pence?" This question was asked of the Duke of St. Bungay, a great nobleman whom all Liberals loved, and a member of the Cabinet. He

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had come in since dinner, and had been asking a question or two as to what had been decided.

"Well, yes; if properly invested I think it will. I 'm glad it is not to contain five semitenths. A semitenth would never have been a popular form of money in England. We hate new names so much that we have not yet got beyond talking of fourpenny bits."

"There 's a great deal in a name, is n't there? You don't think they 'll call them Pallisers, or Palls, or anything of that sort, do you? I should n't like to hear that under the new regime two lollypops were to cost three Palls. But they say it never can be carried this session, and we sha'n't be in, in the next year."

"Who says so? Don't be such a prophetess of evil, Lady Glencora. I mean to be in for the next three sessions, and I mean to see Palliser's measure carried through the House of Lords next session. I shall be paying for my mutton chops at so many quints a chop yet. Don't you think so, Fawn?"

"I don't know what to think," said Lord Fawn, whose mind was intent on other matters. After that he left the room as quickly as he could, and escaped out into the street. His mind was very much disturbed. If Lady Glencora was determined to take up the cudgels for the woman he had rejected, the comfort and peace of his life would be over. He knew well enough how strong was Lady Glencora.

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CHAPTER LVI.

JOB'S COMFORTERS.

MRS. CARBUNCLE and Lady Eustace had now been up in town between six and seven weeks, and the record of their doings has necessarily dealt chiefly with robberies and the rumours of robberies. But at intervals the minds of the two ladies had been intent on other things. The former was still intent on marrying her niece, Lucinda Roanoke, to Sir Griffin, and the latter had never for a moment forgotten the imperative duty which lay upon her of revenging herself upon Lord Fawn. The match between Sir Griffin and Lucinda was still to be a match. Mrs. Carbuncle persevered in the teeth both of the gentleman and of the lady, and still promised herself success. And our Lizzie, in the midst of all her troubles, had not been idle. In doing her justice we must acknowledge that she had almost abandoned the hope of becoming Lady Fawn. Other hopes and other ambitions had come upon her. Latterly the Corsair had been all in all to her, with exceptional moments in which she told herself that her heart belonged exclusively to her cousin Frank. But Lord Fawn's offences were not to be forgotten, and she continually urged upon her cousin the depth of the wrongs which she had suffered.

On the part of Frank Greystock there was certainly no desire to let the Under-Secretary escape. It is

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hoped that the reader, to whom every tittle of this story has been told without reserve, and every secret unfolded, will remember that others were not treated with so much open candour. The reader knows much more of Lizzie Eustace than did her cousin Frank. He, indeed, was not quite in love with Lizzie; but to him she was a pretty, graceful young woman, to whom he was bound by many ties, and who had been cruelly injured. Dangerous she was doubtless, and perhaps a little artificial. To have had her married to Lord Fawn would have been a good thing, and would still be a good thing. According to all the rules known in such matters Lord Fawn was bound to marry her. He had become engaged to her, and Lizzie had done nothing to forfeit her engagement. As to the necklace, the plea made for jilting her on that ground was a disgraceful pretext. Everybody was beginning to perceive that Mr. Camperdown would never have succeeded in getting the diamonds from her, even if they had not been stolen. It was "preposterous," as Frank said over and over again to his friend Herriot, that a man when he was engaged to a lady, should take upon himself to judge her conduct as Lord Fawn had done, and then ride out of his engagement on a verdict found by himself. Frank had therefore willingly displayed alacrity in persecuting his lordship, and had not been altogether without hope that he might drive the two into a marriage yet, in spite of the protestations made by Lizzie at Portray.

Lord Fawn had certainly not spent a happy winter. Between Mrs. Hittaway on one side and Frank Greystock on the other, his life had been a burthen to him. It had been suggested to him by various people that

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he was behaving badly to the lady, who was represented as having been cruelly misused by fortune and by himself. On the other hand it had been hinted to him, that nothing was too bad to believe of Lizzie Eustace, and that no calamity could be so great as that by which he would be overwhelmed were he still to allow himself to be forced into that marriage. "It would be better," Mrs. Hittaway had said, "to retire to Ireland at once and cultivate your demesne in Tipperary." This was a grievous sentence, and one which had greatly excited the brother's wrath; but it had shown how very strong was his sister's opinion against the lady to whom he had unfortunately offered his hand. Then there came to him a letter from Mr. Greystock, in which he was asked for his "written explanation." If there be a proceeding which an official man dislikes worse than another, it is a demand for a written explanation. "It is impossible," Frank had said, "that your conduct to my cousin should be allowed to drop without further notice. Hers has been without reproach. Your engagement with her has been made public, chiefly by you, and it is out of the question that she should be treated as you are treating her, and that your lordship should escape without punishment." What the punishment was to be he did not say; but there did come a punishment on Lord Fawn from the eyes of every man whose eyes met his own, and in the tones of every voice that addressed him. The looks of the very clerks in the India Office accused him of behaving badly to a young woman, and the doorkeeper at the House of Lords seemed to glance askance at him. And now Lady Glencora, who was the social leader of his own party, the feminine pole-star of the liberal heavens, the

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most popular and the most daring woman in London, had attacked him personally, and told him that he ought to call on Lady Eustace!

Let it not for a moment be supposed that Lord Fawn was without conscience in the matter or indifferent to moral obligations. There was not a man in London less willing to behave badly to a young woman than Lord Fawn; or one who would more diligently struggle to get back to the right path, if convinced that he was astray. But he was one who detested interference in his private matters, and who was nearly driven mad between his sister and Frank Greystock. When he left Lady Glencora's house he walked toward his own abode with a dark cloud upon his brow. He was at first very angry with Lady Glencora. Even her position gave her no right to meddle with his most private affairs as she had done. He would resent it, and would quarrel with Lady Glencora. What right could she have to advise him to call upon any woman? But by degrees this wrath died away, and gave place to fears, and qualms, and inward questions. He, too, had found a change in general opinion about the diamonds. When he had taken upon himself with a high hand to dissolve his own engagement, everybody had, as he thought, acknowledged that Lizzie Eustace was keeping property which did not belong to her. Now people talked of her losses as though the diamonds had been undoubtedly her own. On the next morning Lord Fawn took an opportunity of seeing Mr. Camperdown.

"My dear lord," said Mr. Camperdown, "I shall wash my hands of the matter altogether. The diamonds are gone, and the questions now are, who stole

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them, and where are they? In our business we can't meddle with such questions as those."

"You will drop the bill in Chancery then?"

"What good can the bill do us when the diamonds are gone? If Lady Eustace had anything to do with the robbery——"

"You suspect her, then?"

"No, my lord; no. I cannot say that. I have no right to say that. Indeed it is not Lady Eustace that I suspect. She has got into bad hands, perhaps; but I do not think that she is a thief."

"You were suggesting that, if she had anything to do with the robbery——"

"Well; yes; if she had, it would not be for us to take steps against her in the matter. In fact, the trustees have decided that they will do nothing more, and my hands are tied. If the minor, when he comes of age, claims the property from them, they will prefer to replace it. It is n't very likely; but that 's what they say."

"But if it was an heirloom——," suggested Lord Fawn, going back to the old claim.

"That 's exploded," said Mr. Camperdown. "Mr. Dove was quite clear about that."

This was the end of the filing of that bill in Chancery as to which Mr. Camperdown had been so very enthusiastic! Now it certainly was the case that poor Lord Fawn in his conduct toward Lizzie had trusted greatly to the support of Mr. Camperdown's legal proceeding. The world could hardly have expected him to marry a woman against whom a bill in Chancery was being carried on for the recovery of diamonds which did not belong to her. But that support was now altogether

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withdrawn from him. It was acknowledged that the necklace was not an heirloom, clearly acknowledged by Mr. Camperdown! And even Mr. Camperdown would not express an opinion that the lady had stolen her own diamonds.

How would it go with him, if, after all, he were to marry her? The bone of contention between them had at any rate been made to vanish. The income was still there, and Lady Glencora Palliser had all but promised her friendship. As he entered the India Office on his return from Mr. Camperdown's chambers, he almost thought that that would be the best way out of his difficulty. In his room he found his brother-in-law, Mr. Hittaway, waiting for him. It is almost necessary that a man should have some friend whom he can trust in delicate affairs, and Mr. Hittaway was selected as Lord Fawn's friend. He was not at all points the man whom Lord Fawn would have chosen, but for their close connection. Mr. Hittaway was talkative, perhaps a little loud, and too apt to make capital out of every incident of his life. But confidential friends are not easily found, and one does not wish to increase the circle to whom one's family secrets must become known. Mr. Hittaway was at any rate zealous for the Fawn family, and then his character as an official man stood high. He had been asked on the previous evening to step across from the Civil Appeal Office to give his opinion respecting that letter from Frank Greystock demanding a written explanation. The letter had been sent to him; and Mr. Hittaway had carried it home and shown it to his wife. "He 's a cantankerous Tory, and determined to make himself disagreeable," said Mr. Hittaway, taking

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the letter from his pocket and beginning the conversation. Lord Fawn seated himself in his great arm-chair, and buried his face in his hands. "I am disposed, after much consideration, to advise you to take no notice of the letter," said Mr. Hittaway, giving his counsel in accordance with instructions received from his wife. Lord Fawn still buried his face. "Of course the thing is painful, very painful. But out of two evils one should choose the least. The writer of this letter is altogether unable to carry out his threat."

"What can the man do to him!" Mrs. Hittaway had asked, almost snapping at her husband as she did so.

"And then," continued Mr. Hittaway, "we all know that public opinion is with you altogether. The conduct of Lady Eustace is notorious."

"Everybody is taking her part," said Lord Fawn, almost crying.

"Surely not."

"Yes; they are. The bill in Chancery has been withdrawn, and it's my belief that if the necklace were found to-morrow, there would be nothing to prevent her keeping it, just as she did before."

"But it was an heirloom?"

"No, it was n't. The lawyers were all wrong about it. As far as I can see, lawyers always are wrong. About those nine lacs of rupees for the Sawab, Finlay was all wrong. Camperdown owns that he was wrong. If, after all, the diamonds were hers, I 'm sure I don't know what I am to do. Thank you, Hittaway, for coming over. That 'll do for the present. Just leave that ruffian's letter, and I 'll think about it."

This was considered by Mrs. Hittaway to be a very

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bad state of things, and there was great consternation in Warwick Square when Mr. Hittaway told his wife this new story of her brother's weakness. She was not going to be weak. She did not intend to withdraw her opposition to the marriage. She was not going to be frightened by Lizzie Eustace and Frank Greystock, knowing as she did that they were lovers, and very improper lovers, too. "Of course she stole them herself," said Mrs. Hittaway; "and I don't doubt but she stole her own money afterwards. There 's nothing she would n't do. I 'd sooner see Frederic in his grave than married to such a woman as that. Men don't know how sly women can be; that 's the truth. And Frederic has been so spoilt among them down at Richmond, that he has no real judgment left. I don't suppose he means to marry her."

"Upon my word I don't know," said Mr. Hittaway. Then Mrs. Hittaway made up her mind that she would at once write a letter to Scotland.

There was an old lord about London in those days, or rather one who was an old Liberal but a young lord, one Lord Mount Thistle, who had sat in the Cabinet, and had lately been made a peer when his place in the Cabinet was wanted. He was a pompous, would-be important, silly old man, well acquainted with all the traditions of his party, and perhaps on that account useful, but a bore, and very apt to meddle when he was not wanted. Lady Glencora, on the day after her dinner-party, whispered into his ear that Lord Fawn was getting himself into trouble, and that a few words of caution, coming to him from one whom he respected so much as he did Lord Mount Thistle, would be of service to him. Lord Mount Thistle had known Lord

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Fawn's father, and declared himself at once to be quite entitled to interfere. "He is really behaving badly to Lady Eustace," said Lady Glencora, "and I don't think that he knows it." Lord Mount Thistle, proud of a commission from the hands of Lady Glencora, went almost at once to his old friend's son. He found him at the House that night, and whispered his few words of caution in one of the lobbies.

"I know you will excuse me, Fawn," Lord Mount Thistle said, "but people seem to think that you are not behaving quite well to Lady Eustace."

"What people?" demanded Lord Fawn.

"My dear fellow, that is a question that cannot be answered. You know that I am the last man to interfere if I didn't think it my duty as a friend. You were engaged to her?"—Lord Fawn only frowned. "If so," continued the late cabinet minister, "and if you have broken it off, you ought to give your reasons. She has a right to demand as much as that."

On the next morning, Friday, there came to him the note which Lady Glencora had recommended Lizzie to write. It was very short. "Had you not better come and see me? You can hardly think that things should be left as they are now. L. E.—Hertford street, Thursday." He had hoped—he had ventured to hope—that things might be left, and that they would arrange themselves; that he could throw aside his engagement without further trouble, and that the subject would drop. But it was not so. His enemy, Frank Greystock, had demanded from him a "written explanation" of his conduct. Mr. Camperdown had deserted him. Lady Glencora Palliser, with whom he had not the honour of any intimate acquaint-

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ance, had taken upon herself to give him advice. Lord Mount Thistle had found fault with him. And now there had come a note from Lizzie Eustace herself, which he could hardly venture to leave altogether unnoticed. On that Friday he dined at his club, and then went to his sister's house in Warwick Square. If assistance might be had anywhere, it would be from his sister. She, at any rate, would not want courage in carrying on the battle on his behalf.

"Ill-used!" she said, as soon as they were closeted together. "Who dares to say so?"

"That old fool, Mount Thistle, has been with me."

"I hope, Frederic, you don't mind what such a man as that says. He has probably been prompted by some friend of hers. And who else?"

"Camperdown turns round now and says that they don't mean to do anything more about the necklace. Lady Glencora Palliser told me the other day that all the world believes that the thing was her own."

"What does Lady Glencora Palliser know about it? If Lady Glencora Palliser would mind her own affairs it would be much better for her. I remember when she had troubles enough of her own, without meddling with other people's."

"And now I've got this note." Lord Fawn had already shown Lizzie's few scrawled words to his sister. "I think I must go and see her."

"Do no such thing, Frederic."

"Why not? I must answer it, and what can I say?"

"If you go there, that woman will be your wife, you'll never have a happy day again as long as you live. The match is broken off, and she knows it. I should n't take the slightest notice of her, or of her cousin, or of any

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of them. If she chooses to bring an action against you, that is another thing."

Lord Fawn paused for a few moments before he answered. "I think I ought to go," he said.

"And I am sure that you ought not. It is not only about the diamonds, though that was quite enough to break off any engagement. Have you forgotten what I told you that the man saw at Portray?"

"I don't know that the man spoke the truth."

"But he did."

"And I hate that kind of espionage. It is so very likely that mistakes should be made."

"When she was sitting in his arms — and kissing him! If you choose to do it, Frederic, of course you must. We can't prevent it. You are free to marry any one you please."

"I 'm not talking of marrying her."

"What do you suppose she wants you to go there for? As for political life, I am quite sure it would be the death of you. If I were you I would n't go near her. You have got out of the scrape, and I would remain out."

"But I have n't got out," said Lord Fawn.

On the next day, Saturday, he did nothing in the matter. He went down, as was his custom, to Richmond, and did not once mention Lizzie's name. Lady Fawn and her daughters never spoke of her now — neither of her, nor in his presence, of poor Lucy Morris. But on his return to London on the Sunday evening he found another note from Lizzie. "You will hardly have the hardihood to leave my note unanswered. Pray let me know when you will come to me." Some answer must, as he felt, be made to her. For a moment he

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thought of asking his mother to call; but he at once saw that by doing so he might lay himself open to terrible ridicule. Could he induce Lord Mount Thistle to be his Mercury? It would, he felt, be quite impossible to make Lord Mount Thistle understand all the facts of his position. His sister, Mrs. Hittaway, might have gone, were it not that she herself was violently opposed to any visit. The more he thought of it the more convinced he became that, should it be known that he had received two such notes from a lady and that he had not answered or noticed them, the world would judge him to have behaved badly. So at last he wrote — on that Sunday evening — fixing a somewhat distant day for his visit to Hertford street. His note was as follows:

"Lord Fawn presents his compliments to Lady Eustace. In accordance with the wish expressed in Lady Eustace's two notes of the 23d instant and this date, Lord Fawn will do himself the honour of waiting upon Lady Eustace on Saturday next, March 3d, at 12, noon. Lord Fawn had thought that under circumstances as they now exist, no further personal interview could lead to the happiness of either party; but as Lady Eustace thinks otherwise, he feels himself constrained to comply with her desire.

"Sunday evening, February 25, 18—."

"I am going to see her in the course of this week," he said, in answer to a further question from Lady Glencora, who, chancing to meet him in society, had again addressed him on the subject. He lacked the courage to tell Lady Glencora to mind her own business and to allow him to do the same. Had she been a little less

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great than she was, either as regarded herself or her husband, he would have done so. But Lady Glencora was the social queen of the party to which he belonged, and Mr. Palliser was Chancellor of the Exchequer, and would some day be Duke of Omnium.

"As you are great, be merciful, Lord Fawn," said Lady Glencora. "You men, I believe, never realise what it is that women feel when they love. It is my belief that she will die unless you are reunited to her. And then she is so beautiful."

"It is a subject that I cannot discuss, Lady Glencora."

"I dare say not. And I 'm sure I am the last person to wish to give you pain. But you see, if the poor lady has done nothing to merit your anger, it does seem rather a strong measure to throw her off and give her no reason whatever. How would you defend yourself, suppose she published it all?" Lady Glencora's courage was very great, and perhaps we may say her impudence also. This last question Lord Fawn left unanswered, walking away in great dudgeon.

In the course of the week he told his sister of the interview which he had promised, and she endeavoured to induce him to postpone it till a certain man should arrive from Scotland. She had written for Mr. Andrew Gowran — sending down funds for Mr. Gowran's journey — so that her brother might hear Mr. Gowran's evidence out of Mr. Gowran's own mouth. Would not Frederic postpone the interview till he should have seen Mr. Gowran? But to this request Frederic declined to accede. He had fixed a day and an hour. He had made an appointment. Of course he must keep it.

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CHAPTER LVII.

HUMPTY DUMPTY.

THE robbery at the house in Hertford street took place on the 30th of January, and on the morning of the 28th of February Bunfit and Gager were sitting together in a melancholy, dark little room in Scotland Yard, discussing the circumstances of that nefarious act. A month had gone by and nobody was yet in custody. A month had passed since that second robbery; but nearly eight weeks had passed since the robbery at Carlisle, and even that was still a mystery. The newspapers had been loud in their condemnation of the police. It had been asserted over and over again that in no other civilised country in the world could so great an amount of property have passed through the hands of thieves without leaving some clue by which the police would have made their way to the truth. Major Mackintosh had been declared to be altogether incompetent, and all the Bunfits and Gagers of the force had been spoken of as drones and moles and ostriches. They were idle and blind, and so stupid as to think that when they saw nothing others saw less. The Major, who was a broad-shouldered, philosophical man, bore all this as though it were, of necessity, a part of the burthen of his profession: but the Bunfits and Gagers were very angry, and at their wits' ends. It did not occur to them to feel animosity against the

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newspapers which abused them. The thieves who would not be caught were their great enemies; and there was common to them a conviction that men so obstinate as these thieves — men to whom a large amount of grace and liberty for indulgence had accrued — should be treated with uncommon severity when they were caught. There was this excuse always on their lips, that had it been an affair simply of thieves, such as thieves ordinarily are, everything would have been discovered long since. But when lords and ladies with titles come to be mixed up with such an affair — folk in whose house a policeman can't have his will at searching and browbeating — how is a detective to detect anything?

Bunfit and Gager had both been driven to recast their theories as to the great Carlisle affair by the circumstances of the later affair in Hertford street. They both thought that Lord George had been concerned in the robbery. That, indeed, had now become the general opinion of the world at large. He was a man of doubtful character, with large expenses, and with no recognised means of living. He had formed a great intimacy with Lady Eustace at a period in which she was known to be carrying these diamonds about with her, had been staying with her at Portray Castle when the diamonds were there, and had been her companion on the journey during which the diamonds were stolen. The only men in London supposed to be capable of dealing advantageously with such a property were Harter and Benjamin, as to whom it was known that they were conversant with the existence of the diamonds, and known also that they were in the habit of having dealings with Lord George. It was, moreover, known that

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Lord George had been closeted with Mr. Benjamin on the morning after his arrival in London. These things put together made it almost a certainty that Lord George had been concerned in the matter. Bunfit had always been sure of it. Gager, though differing much from Bunfit as to details, had never been unwilling to suspect Lord George. But the facts known could not be got to dovetail themselves pleasantly. If Lord George had possessed himself of the diamonds at Carlisle, or with Lizzie's connivance before they reached Carlisle, then, why had there been a second robbery? Bunfit, who was very profound in his theory, suggested that the second robbery was an additional plant, got up with the view of throwing more dust into the eyes of the police. Patience Crabstick had, of course, been one of the gang throughout, and she had now been allowed to go off with her mistress's money and lesser trinkets, so that the world of Scotland Yard might be thrown more and more into the mire of ignorance and darkness of doubt. To this view Gager was altogether opposed. He was inclined to think that Lord George had taken the diamonds at Carlisle with Lizzie's connivance; that he had restored them in London to her keeping, finding the suspicion against him too heavy to admit of his dealing with them, and that now he had stolen them a second time, again with Lizzie's connivance; but in this latter point Gager did not pretend to the assurance of any conviction.

But Gager at the present moment had achieved a triumph in the matter which he was not at all disposed to share with his elder officer. Perhaps, on the whole, more power is lost than gained by habits of secrecy. To be discreet is a fine thing, especially for a police-

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man; but when discretion is carried to such a length in the direction of self-confidence as to produce a belief that no aid is wanted for the achievement of great results, it will often militate against all achievement. Had Scotland Yard been less discreet and more confidential, the mystery might perhaps have been sooner unravelled. Gager at this very moment had reason to believe that a man whom he knew could — and would, if operated upon duly — communicate to him, Gager, the secret of the present whereabouts of Patience Crabstick! That belief was a great possession, and much too important, as Gager thought, to be shared lightly with such a one as Mr. Bunfit — a thick-headed sort of man, in Gager's opinion, although no doubt he had by means of industry been successful in some difficult cases.

"'Is lordship ain't stirred," said Bunfit.

"How do you mean — stirred, Mr. Bunfit?"

"Ain't moved nowheres out of London."

"What should he move out of London for? What could he get by cutting? There ain't nothing so bad when anything's up against one as letting on that one wants to bolt. He knows all that. He 'll stand his ground. He won't bolt."

"I don't suppose as he will, Gager. It's a rum go, ain't it? the rummiest as I ever see." This remark had been made so often by Mr. Bunfit, that Gager had become almost weary of hearing it.

"Oh — rum; rum be b——. What's the use of all that? From what the governor told me this morning, there is n't a shadow of doubt where the diamonds are."

"In Paris, of course," said Bunfit.

"They never went to Paris. They were taken from

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here to Hamburg in a commercial man's kit — a fellow as travels in knives and scissors. Then they was recut. They say the cutting was the quickest bit of work ever done by one man in Hamburg. And now they 're in New-York. That 's what has come of the diamonds."

"Benjamin, in course," said Bunfit, in a low whisper, just taking the pipe from between his lips.

"Well — yes. No doubt it was Benjamin. But how did Benjamin get 'em?"

"Lord George — in course," said Bunfit.

"And how did he get 'em?"

"Well — that 's where it is; is n't it?" Then there was a pause, during which Bunfit continued to smoke. "As sure as your name 's Gager, he got 'em at Carlisle."

"And what took Smiler down to Carlisle?"

"Just to put a face on it," said Bunfit.

"And who cut the door?"

"Billy Cann did," said Bunfit.

"And who forced the box?"

"Them two did," said Bunfit.

"And all to put a face on it?"

"Yes — just that. And an uncommon good face they did put on it between 'em — the best as I ever see."

"All right," said Gager. "So far, so good. I don't agree with you, Mr. Bunfit; because the thing, when it was done, would n't be worth the money. Lord love you, what would all that have cost? And what was to prevent the lady and Lord George together taking the diamonds to Benjamin and getting their price. It never does to be too clever, Mr. Bunfit. And when

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that was all done, why did the lady go and get herself robbed again? No — I don't say but what you 're a clever man, in your way, Mr. Bunfit; but you 've not got a hold of the thing here. Why was Smiler going about like a mad dog — only that he found himself took in?"

"Maybe he expected something else in the box — more than the necklace — as was to come to him," suggested Bunfit.

"Gammon."

"I don't see why you say gammon, Gager. It ain't polite."

"It is gammon — running away with ideas like them, just as if you was one of the public. When they two opened that box at Carlisle, which they did as certain as you sit there, they believed as the diamonds were there. They were not there."

"I don't think as they was," said Bunfit.

"Very well; where were they! Just walk up to it, Mr. Bunfit, making your ground good as you go. They two men cut the door, and took the box and opened it, and when they 'd opened it, they did n't get the swag. Where was the swag?"

"Lord George," said Bunfit again.

"Very well, Lord George. Like enough. But it comes to this. Benjamin, and they two men of his, had laid themselves out for the robbery. Now, Mr. Bunfit, whether Lord George and Benjamin were together in that first affair, or whether they were n't, I can't see my way just at present, and I don't know as you can see yours — not saying but what you 're as quick as most men, Mr. Bunfit. If he was — and I rayther think that 's about it — then he and Benjamin

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must have had a few words, and he must have got the jewels from the lady over night."

"Of course he did; and Smiler and Billy Cann knew as they were n't there."

"There you are, all back again, Mr. Bunfit, not making your ground good as you go. Smiler and Cann did their job according to order — and precious sore hearts they had when they 'd got the box open. Those fellows at Carlisle — just like all the provincials — went to work open mouthed, and before the party left Carlisle it was known that Lord George was suspected."

"You can't trust those fellows any way," said Mr. Bunfit.

"Well — what happens next? Lord George, he goes to Benjamin, but he is n't goin' to take the diamonds with him. He has had words with Benjamin or he has not. Any ways he is n't goin' to take the necklace with him on that morning. He has n't been goin' to keep the diamonds about him, not since what was up at Carlisle. So he gives the diamonds back to the lady."

"And she had 'em all along?"

"I don't say it was so, but I can see my way upon that hy-pothesis."

"There was something as she had to conceal, Gager. I 've said that all through. I knew it in a moment when I seed her faint."

"She 's had a deal to conceal, I don't doubt. Well, there they are — with her still — and the box is gone, and the people as is bringing the lawsuit, Mr. Camperdown and the rest of 'em, is off their tack. What 's she to do with 'em?"

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"Take 'em to Benjamin," said Bunfit with confidence.

"That 's all very well, Mr. Bunfit. But there 's a quarrel up already with Benjamin. Benjamin was to have had 'em before. Benjamin has spent a goodish bit of money, and has been thrown over rather. I dare say Benjamin was as bad as Smiler, or worse. No doubt Benjamin let on to Smiler, and thought as Smiler was too many for him. I dare say there was a few words between him and Smiler. I would n't wonder if Smiler did n't threaten to punch Benjamin's head — which well he could do it — and if there was n't a few playful remarks between 'em about penal servitude for life. You see, Mr. Bunfit, it could n't have been pleasant for any of 'em."

"They 'd 've split," said Bunfit.

"But they did n't, not downright. Well, there we are. The diamonds is with the lady. Lord George has done it all. Lord George and Lady Eustace — they 're keeping company, no doubt, after their own fashion. He 's a-robbing of her, and she has to do pretty much as she 's bid. The diamonds is with the lady, and Lord George is pretty well afraid to look at 'em. After all that 's being done there is n't much to wonder at in that. Then comes the second robbery."

"And Lord George planned that too?" asked Bunfit.

"I don't pretend to say I know, but just put it this way, Mr. Bunfit. Of course the thieves were let in by the woman Crabstick?"

"Not a doubt."

"Of course they was Smiler and Billy Cann?"

"I suppose they was."

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"She was always about the lady, a-doing for her in everything. Say she goes to Benjamin and tells him as how her lady still has the necklace, and then he puts up the second robbery. Then you 'd have it all round."

"And Lord George would have lost 'em? It can't be. Lord George and he are thick as thieves up to this day."

"Very well. I don't say anything against that. Lord George knows as she has 'em; indeed he 'd given 'em back to her to keep. We 've got as far as that, Mr. Bunfit."

"I think she did 'ave 'em."

"Very well. What does Lord George do then? He can't make money of 'em. They 're too hot for his fingers, and so he finds when he thinks of taking 'em into the market. So he puts Benjamin up to the second robbery."

"Who 's drawing it fine, now, Gager; eh?"

"Mr. Bunfit, I 'm not saying as I 've got the truth beyond this, that Benjamin and his two men were clean done at Carlisle, that Lord George and his lady brought the jewels up to town between 'em, and that the party who did n't get 'em at Carlisle tried their hand again, and did get 'em in Hertford street." In all of which the ingenious Gager would have been right if he could have kept his mind clear from the alluring conviction that a lord had been the chief of the thieves.

"We shall never make a case of it now," said Bunfit despondently.

"I mean to try it on all the same. There 's Smiler about town as bold as brass, and dressed to the nines. He had the cheek to tell me as he was going down to

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the Newmarket Spring to look after a horse he 's got a share in."

"I was talking to Billy only yesterday," added Bunfit. "I 've got it on my mind that they did n't treat Billy quite on the square. He did n't let on anything about Benjamin; but he told me out plain, as how he was very much disgusted. 'Mr. Bunfit,' said he, 'there 's that roguery about, that a plain man like me can't touch it. There 's them as 'd pick my eyes out while I was sleeping, and then swear it against my very self.' Them were his words, and I knew as how Benjamin had n't been on the square with him."

"You did n't let on anything, Mr. Bunfit?"

"Well, I just reminded him as how there was five hundred pounds going a-begging from Mr. Camperdown."

"And what did he say to that, Mr. Bunfit?"

"Well, he said a good deal. He 's a sharp little fellow, is Billy, as has read a deal. You 've heard of 'Umpty Dumpty, Gager? 'Umpty Dumpty was a hegg."

"All right."

"As had a fall, and was smashed, and there 's a little poem about him."

"I know."

"Well; Billy says to me: 'Mr. Camperdown don't want no hinformation; he wants the diamonds.' Them diamonds is like 'Umpty Dumpty, Mr. Bunfit. All the king's horses and all the king's men could n't put 'Umpty Dumpty up again."

"Billy was about right there," said the younger officer, rising from his seat.

Late on the afternoon of the same day, when London

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had already been given over to the gaslights, Mr. Gager, having dressed himself especially for the occasion of the friendly visit which he intended to make, sauntered into a small public-house at the corner of Meek street and Pineapple Court, which locality, as all men well versed with London are aware, lies within one minute's walk of the top of Gray's Inn Lane. Gager, during his conference with his colleague Bunfit, had been dressed in plain black clothes; but in spite of his plain clothes he looked every inch a policeman. There was a stiffness about his limbs, and, at the same time, a sharpness in his eyes, which, in the conjunction with the locality in which he was placed, declared his profession beyond the possibility of mistake. Nor, in that locality, would he have desired to be taken for anything else. But as he entered the "Rising Sun" in Meek street, there was nothing of the policeman about him. He might probably have been taken for a betting man, with whom the world had latterly gone well enough to enable him to maintain that sleek, easy, greasy appearance, which seems to be the beau ideal of a betting man's personal ambition. "Well, Mr. Howard," said the lady at the bar, "a sight of you is good for sore eyes."

"Six penn'orth of brandy, — warm, if you please, my dear," said the pseudo-Howard, as he strolled easily into an inner room, with which he seemed to be quite familiar. He seated himself in an old-fashioned wooden arm-chair, gazed up at the gas lamp, and stirred his liquor slowly. Occasionally he raised the glass to his lips, but he did not seem to be at all intent upon his drinking. When he entered the room, there had been a gentleman and a lady there, whose

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festive moments seemed to be disturbed by some slight disagreement; but Howard, as he gazed at the lamp, paid no attention to them whatever. They soon left the room, their quarrel and their drink finished together, and others dropped in and out. Mr. Howard's "warm" must almost have become cold, so long did he sit there, gazing at the gas lamps rather than attending to his brandy and water. Not a word did he speak to any one for more than an hour, and not a sign did he show of impatience. At last he was alone; but had not been so for above a minute when in stepped a jaunty little man, certainly not more than five feet high, about three or four and twenty years of age, dressed with great care, with his trousers sticking to his legs, with a French chimney-pot hat on his head, very much peeked fore and aft and closely turned up at the sides. He had a bright-coloured silk-handkerchief round his neck, and a white shirt, of which the collar and wristbands were rather larger and longer than suited the small dimensions of the man. He wore a white greatcoat tight buttoned round his waist, but so arranged as to show the glories of the coloured handkerchief; and in his hand he carried a diminutive cane with a little silver knob. He stepped airily into the room, and as he did so he addressed our friend the policeman with much cordiality.

"My dear Mr. 'Oward," he said, "this is a pleasure. This is a pleasure. This is a pleasure."

"What is it to be?" asked Gager.

"Well; ay, what? Shall I say a little port wine negus, with the nutmeg in it rayther strong?" This suggestion he made to a young lady from the bar, who had followed him into the room. The negus was

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brought and paid for by Gager, who then requested that they might be left there undisturbed for five minutes. The young lady promised to do her best, and then closed the door. "And now, Mr. 'Oward, what can I do for you?" said Mr. Cann, the burglar.

Gager, before he answered, took a pipe-case out of his pocket, and lit the pipe. "Will you smoke, Billy?" said he.

"Well — no, I don't know that I will smoke. A very little tobacco goes a long way with me, Mr. 'Oward. One cigar before I turn in; that 's about the outside of it. You see, Mr. 'Oward, pleasures should never be made necessities, when the circumstances of a gentleman's life may perhaps require that they shall be abandoned for prolonged periods. In your line of life, Mr. 'Oward, which has its objections, smoking may be pretty well a certainty." Mr. Cann, as he made these remarks, skipped about the room, and gave point to his argument by touching Mr. Howard's waistcoat with the end of his cane.

"And now, Billy, how about the young woman?"

"I have n't set eyes on her these six weeks, Mr. 'Oward. I never see her but once in my life, Mr. 'Oward; or, maybe, twice, for one's memory is deceitful; and I don't know that I ever wish to see her again. She ain't one of my sort, Mr. 'Oward. I likes 'em soft, and sweet, and coming. This one, she has her good p'ints about her, as clean a foot and ankle as I 'd wish to see; but, laws, what a nose, Mr. 'Oward. And then for manner; she 's no more manner than a stable dog."

"She 's in London, Billy?"

"How am I to know, Mr. 'Oward?"

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"What's the good, then, of your coming here?" asked Gager, with no little severity in his voice.

"I don't know as it is good. I 'ave n't said nothing about any good, Mr. 'Oward. What you wants to find is them diamonds?"

"Of course I do."

"Well; you won't find 'em. I knows nothing about 'em, in course, except just what I 'm told. You know my line of life, Mr. 'Oward?"

"Not a doubt about it."

"And I know yours. I 'm in the way of hearing about these things, and for the matter of that, so are you too. It may be, my ears are the longer. I 'ave 'eard. You don't expect me to tell you more than just that. I 'ave 'eard. It was a pretty thing, was n't it? But I was n't in it myself, more 's the pity. You can't expect fairer than that, Mr. 'Oward?"

"And what have you heard?"

"Them diamonds is gone where none of you can get at 'em. That five hundred pounds as the lawyers 'ave offered is just nowhere. If you want information, Mr. 'Oward, you should say information."

"And you could give it; eh, Billy?"

"No — no —" He uttered these two negatives in a low voice, and with much deliberation. "I could n't give it. A man can't give what he has n't got; but perhaps I could get it."

"What an ass you are, Billy. Don't you know that I know all about it?"

"What an ass you are, Mr. 'Oward. Don't I know that you don't know; or you would n't come to me. You guess. You 're always a-guessing. But guessing ain't knowing. You don't know; nor yet don't I.

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What is it to be, if I find out where that young woman is?"

"A tenner, Billy."

"Five quid now, and five when you 've seen her?"

"All right, Billy."

"She 's a-going to be married to Smiler next Sunday as ever is down at Ramsgate; and at Ramsgate she is now. You 'll find her, Mr. 'Oward, if you 'll keep your eyes open, somewhere about the 'Fiddle with One String.'"

This information was so far recognised by Mr. Howard as correct, that he paid Mr. Cann five sovereigns down for it at once.

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CHAPTER LVIII.

"THE FIDDLE WITH ONE STRING."

MR. GAGER reached Ramsgate by the earliest train on the following morning, and was not long in finding out the "Fiddle with One String." The "Fiddle with One String" was a public-house, very humble in appearance, in the outskirts of the town, on the road leading to Pegwell Bay. On this occasion Mr. Gager was dressed in his ordinary plain clothes, and though the policeman's calling might not be so manifestly declared by his appearance at Ramsgate as it was in Scotland Yard, still, let a hint in that direction have ever been given, and the ordinary citizens of Ramsgate would at once be convinced that the man was what he was. Gager had doubtless considered all the circumstances of his day's work carefully, and had determined that success would more probably attend him with this than with any other line of action. He walked at once into the house, and asked whether a young woman was not lodging there. The man of the house was behind the bar, with his wife, and to him Gager whispered a few words. The man stood dumb for a moment, and then his wife spoke. "What's up now?" said she, "There 's no young women here. We don't have no young women." Then the man whispered a word to his wife, during which Gager stood among the customers before the bar with an easy, unembarrassed air.

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"Well, what 's the odds?" said the wife. "There ain't anything wrong with us."

"Never thought there was, ma'am," said Gager. "And there 's nothing wrong as I know of with the young woman." Then the husband and wife consulted together, and Mr. Gager was asked to take a seat in a little parlour, while the woman ran up-stairs for half an instant. Gager looked about him quickly, and took in at a glance the system of the construction of the "Fiddle with One String." He did sit down in the little parlour, with the door open, and remained there for perhaps a couple of minutes. Then he went to the front door, and glanced up at the roof.

"It 's all right," said the keeper of the house, following him. "She ain't a-going to get away. She ain't just very well, and she 's a-lying down."

"You tell her, with my regards," said Gager, "that she need n't be a bit the worse because of me." The man looked at him suspiciously. "You tell her what I say. And tell her, too, the quicker the better. She has a gentleman a-looking after her, I daresay. Perhaps I 'd better be off before he comes." The message was taken up to the lady, and Gager again seated himself in the little parlour.

We are often told that all is fair in love and war, and perhaps the operation on which Mr. Gager was now intent may be regarded as warlike. But he now took advantage of a certain softness in the character of the lady whom he wished to meet, which hardly seems to be justifiable even in a policeman. When Lizzie's tall footman had been in trouble about the necklace, a photograph had been taken from him which had not been restored to him. This was a portrait of Patience

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Crabstick, which she, poor girl, in a tender moment, had given to him, who, had not things gone roughly with them, was to have been her lover. The little picture had fallen into Gager's hands, and he now pulled it from his pocket. He himself had never visited the house in Hertford street till after the second robbery, and, in the flesh, had not as yet seen Miss Crabstick; but he had studied her face carefully, expecting, or at any rate hoping that he might some day enjoy the pleasure of personal acquaintance. That pleasure was now about to come to him, and he prepared himself for it by making himself intimate with the lines of the lady's face as the sun had portrayed them. There was even yet some delay, and Mr. Gager more than once testified uneasiness.

"She ain't a-going to get away," said the mistress of the house, "but a lady as is going to see a gentleman can't jump into her things as a man does." Gager intimated his acquiescence in all this, and again waited.

"The sooner she comes, the less trouble for her," said Gager to the woman. "If you'll only make her believe that." At last, when he had been somewhat over an hour in the house, he was asked to walk upstairs, and then, in a little sitting-room over the bar, he had the opportunity, so much desired, of making personal acquaintance with Patience Crabstick.

It may be imagined that the poor waiting-woman had not been in a happy state of mind since she had been told that a gentleman was waiting to see her down-stairs, who had declared himself to be a policeman immediately on entering the shop. To escape was of course her first idea, but she was soon made to

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understand that this was impracticable. In the first place there was but one staircase, at the bottom of which was the open door of the room in which the policeman was sitting; and then, the woman of the house was very firm in declaring that she would connive at nothing which might cost her and her husband their license. "You 've got to face it," said the woman.

"I suppose they can't make me get out of bed unless I pleases," said Patience firmly. But she knew that even that resource would fail her, and that a policeman, when aggravated, can take upon him all the duties of a lady's maid. She had to face it, and she did face it.

"I've just got to have a few words with you, my dear," said Gager.

"I suppose, then, we 'd better be alone," said Patience; whereupon the woman of the house discreetly left the room.

The interview was so long that the reader would be fatigued were he asked to study a record of all that was said on the occasion. The gentleman and lady were closeted together for more than an hour, and so amicably was the conversation carried on that when the time was half over Gager stepped down-stairs and interested himself in procuring Miss Crabstick's breakfast. He even condescended himself to pick a few shrimps and drink a glass of beer in her company. A great deal was said and something was even settled, as may be learned from a few concluding words of that very memorable conversation. "Just don't you say anything about it, my dear, but leave word for him that you 've gone up to town on business."

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"Lord love you, Mr. Gager, he 'll know all about it."

"Let him know. Of course he 'll know if he comes down. It 's my beliéf he 'll never show himself at Ramsgate again."

"But, Mr. Gager ——"

"Well, my dear."

"You are n't a perjuring of yourself?"

"What; about making you my wife? That I ain't. I 'm upright and always was. There 's no mistake about me when you 've got my word. As soon as this work is off my mind you shall be Mrs. Gager, my dear. And you 'll be all right. You 've been took in, that 's what you have."

"That I have, Mr. Gager," said Patience, wiping her eyes.

"You 've been took in and you must be forgiven."

"I did n't get — not nothing out of the necklace; and as for the other things, they 've frightened me so that I let 'em all go for just what I tell you. And as for Mr. Smiler, I never did n't care for him; that I did n't. He ain't the man to touch my heart; not at all; and it was not likely either. A plain fellow, very, Mr. Gager."

"He 'll be plainer before long, my dear."

"But I 've been that worrited among 'em, Mr. Gager, since first they made their wicked prepositions, that I 've been jest — I don't know how I 've been. And though my lady was not a lady as any girl could like, and did deserve to have her things took if anybody's things ever should be took, still, Mr. Gager, I knows I did wrong. I do know it and I 'm a-repenting of it in sackcloth and ashes; so I am. But you 'll be as good as your word, Mr. Gager?"

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It must be acknowledged that Mr. Gager had bidden high for success, and had allowed himself to be carried away by his zeal almost to the verge of imprudence. It was essential to him that he should take Patience Crabstick back with him to London, and that he should take her as witness and not as a criminal. Mr. Benjamin was the game at which he was flying — Mr. Benjamin, and if possible, Lord George — and he conceived that his net might be big enough to hold Smiler as well as the other two greater fishes, if he could induce Patience Crabstick and Billy Cann to co-operate with him cordially in his fishing.

But his mind was still disturbed on one point. Let him press his beloved Patience as closely as he might with questions, there was one point on which he could not get from her what he believed to be the truth. She persisted that Lord George de Bruce Carruthers had had no hand in either robbery, and Gager had so firmly committed himself to a belief on this matter, that he could not throw the idea away from him, even on the testimony of Patience Crabstick.

On that evening he returned triumphant to Scotland Yard with Patience Crabstick under his wing; and that lady was housed there with every comfort she could desire, except that of personal liberty.

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CHAPTER LIX.

MR. GOWRAN UP IN LONDON.

In the mean time Mrs. Hittaway was diligently spreading a report that Lizzie Eustace either was engaged to marry her cousin Frank, or ought to be so engaged. This she did, no doubt, with the sole object of saving her brother; but she did it with a zeal that dealt as freely with Frank's name as with Lizzie's. They, with all their friends, were her enemies, and she was quite sure that they were, altogether, a wicked degraded set of people. Of Lord George and Mrs. Carbuncle, of Miss Roanoke and Sir Griffin Tewett she believed all manner of evil. She had theories of her own about the jewels, stories — probably of her own manufacture in part, although no doubt she believed them to be true — as to the manner of living at Portray, little histories of Lizzie's debts, and the great fact of the scene which Mr. Gowran had seen with his own eyes. Lizzie Eustace was an abomination to her, and this abominable woman her brother was again in danger of marrying! She was very loud in her denunciations, and took care that they should reach even Lady Linlithgow, so that poor Lucy Morris might know of what sort was the lover in whom she trusted. Andy Gowran had been sent for to town, and was on his journey while Mr. Gager was engaged at Ramsgate. It was at present

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the great object of Mrs. Hittaway's life to induce her brother to see Mr. Gowran before he kept his appointment with Lady Eustace.

Poor Lucy received the wound which was intended for her. The enemy's weapons had repeatedly struck her, but hitherto they had alighted on the strong shield of her faith. But let a shield be never so strong, it may at last be battered out of all form and service. On Lucy's shield there had been much of such batterings, and the blows which had come from him in whom she most trusted had not been the lightest. She had not seen him for months, and his letters were short, unsatisfactory, and rare. She had declared to herself and to her friend Lady Fawn, that no concurrence of circumstances, no absence, however long, no rumours that might reach her ears, would make her doubt the man she loved. She was still steadfast in the same resolution; but in spite of her resolution her heart began to fail her. She became weary, unhappy, and ill at ease, and though she would never acknowledge to herself that she doubted, she did doubt.

"So, after all, your Mr. Greystock is to marry my niece, Lizzie Greystock." This good-natured speech was made one morning to poor Lucy by her present patroness, Lady Linlithgow.

"I rather think not," said Lucy, plucking up her spirits and smiling as she spoke.

"Everybody says so. As for Lizzie she has become quite a heroine. What with her necklace, and her two robberies, and her hunting, and her various lovers — two lords and a member of Parliament, my dear — there is nothing to equal her. Lady Glencora Palliser has been calling on her. She took care to let me

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know that. And I 'm told that she certainly is engaged to her cousin."

"According to your own showing, Lady Linlithgow, she has got two other lovers. Could n't you oblige me by letting her marry one of the lords?"

"I 'm afraid, my dear, that Mr. Greystock is to be the chosen one." Then after a pause the old woman became serious. "What is the use, Miss Morris, of not looking the truth in the face? Mr. Greystock is neglecting you."

"He is not neglecting me. You won't let him come to see me."

"Certainly not; but if he were not neglecting you, you would not be here. And there he is with Lizzie Eustace every day of his life. He can't afford to marry you, and he can afford to marry her. It 's a deal better that you should look it all in the face and know what it must all come to."

"I shall just wait, and never believe a word till he speaks it."

"You hardly know what men are, my dear."

"Very likely not, Lady Linlithgow. It may be that I shall have to pay dear for learning. Of course I may be mistaken as well as another, only I don't believe I am mistaken."

When this little scene took place, only a month remained of the time for which Lucy's services were engaged to Lady Linlithgow, and no definite arrangement had been made as to her future residence. Lady Fawn was prepared to give her a home, and to Lady Fawn, as it seemed, she must go. Lady Linlithgow had declared herself unwilling to continue the existing arrangement because, as she said, it did not suit her

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that her companion should be engaged to marry her late sister's nephew. Not a word had been said about the deanery for the last month or two, and Lucy, though her hopes in that direction had once been good, was far too high spirited to make any suggestion herself as to her reception by her lover's family. In the ordinary course of things she would have to look out for another situation, like any other governess in want of a place; but she could do this only by consulting Lady Fawn; and Lady Fawn when consulted would always settle the whole matter by simply bidding her young friend to come to Fawn Court.

There must be some end of her living at Fawn Court. So much Lucy told herself over and over again. It could be but a temporary measure. If — if it was to be her fate to be taken away from Fawn Court a happy, glorious, triumphant bride, then the additional obligation put upon her by her dear friends would not be more than she could bear. But to go to Fawn Court, and, by degrees, to have it acknowledged that another place must be found for her, would be very bad. She would infinitely prefer any intermediate hardship. How, then, should she know? As soon as she was able to escape from the countess, she went up to her own room, and wrote the following letter. She studied the words with great care as she wrote them — sitting and thinking before she allowed her pen to run on the paper.

"My Dear Frank: It is a long time since we met — is it not? I do not write this as a reproach, but because my friends tell me that I should not continue to think myself engaged to you. They say that,

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situated as you are, you cannot afford to marry a penniless girl, and that I ought not to wish you to sacrifice yourself. I do understand enough of your affairs to know that an imprudent marriage may ruin you, and I certainly do not wish to be the cause of injury to you. All I ask is that you should tell me the truth. It is not that I am impatient; but that I must decide what to do with myself when I leave Lady Linlithgow. Your most affectionate friend, LUCY MORRIS.

"March 2, 18—."

She read this letter over and over again, thinking of all that it said and of all that it omitted to say. She was at first half disposed to make protestations of forgiveness, to assure him that not even within her own heart would she reproach him, should he feel himself bound to retract the promise he had made her. She longed to break out into love, but so to express her love that her lover should know that it was strong enough even to sacrifice itself for his sake. But though her heart longed to speak freely, her judgment told her that it would be better that she should be reticent and tranquil in her language. Any warmth on her part would be in itself a reproach to him. If she really wished to assist him in extricating himself from a difficulty into which he had fallen in her behalf, she would best do so by offering him his freedom in the fewest and plainest words which she could select.

But even when the letter was written she doubted as to the wisdom of sending it. She kept it that she might sleep upon it. She did sleep upon it, and when the morning came she would not send it. Had not absolute faith in her lover been the rock on which she

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had declared to herself that she would build the house of her future hopes? Had not she protested again and again that no caution from others should induce her to waver in her belief? Was it not her great doctrine to trust, to trust implicitly, even though all should be lost if her trust should be misplaced? And was it well that she should depart from all this, merely because it might be convenient for her to make arrangements as to the coming months? If it were to be her fate to be rejected, thrown over, and deceived, of what use to her could be any future arrangements. All to her would be ruin, and it would matter to her nothing whither she should be taken. And then, why should she lie to him as she would lie in sending such a letter? If he did throw her over he would be a traitor, and her heart would be full of reproaches. Whatever might be his future lot in life, he owed it to her to share it with her, and if he evaded his debt he would be a traitor and a miscreant. She would never tell him so. She would be far too proud to condescend to spoken or written reproaches. But she would know that it would be so, and why should she lie to him by saying that it would not be so? Thinking of all this, when the morning came, she left the letter lying within her desk.

Lord Fawn was to call upon Lady Eustace on the Saturday, and on Friday afternoon Mr. Andrew Gowran was in Mrs. Hittaway's back parlour in Warwick Square. After many efforts, and with much persuasion, the brother had agreed to see his sister's great witness. Lord Fawn had felt that he would lower himself by any intercourse with such a one as Andy Gowran in regard to the conduct of the woman whom he had proposed to make his wife, and had endeavoured t

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avoid the meeting. He had been angry, piteous, haughty, and sullen by turns; but Mrs. Hittaway had overcome him by dogged perseverance; and poor Lord Fawn had at last consented. He was to come to Warwick Square as soon as the House was up on Friday evening, and dine there. Before dinner he was to be introduced to Mr. Gowran. Andy arrived at the house at half-past five, and after some conversation with Mrs. Hittaway, was left there all alone to await the coming of Lord Fawn. He was in appearance and manners very different from the Andy Gowran familiarly known among the braes and crofts of Portray. He had a heavy stiff hat, which he carried in his hand. He wore a black swallow-tail coat and black trousers, and a heavy red waistcoat buttoned up nearly to his throat, round which was lightly tied a dingy black silk handkerchief. At Portray no man was more voluble, no man more self-confident, no man more equal to his daily occupations than Andy Gowran; but the unaccustomed clothes, and the journey to London, and the town houses overcame him, and for a while almost silenced him. Mrs. Hittaway found him silent, cautious, and timid. Not knowing what to do with him, fearing to ask him to go and eat in the kitchen, and not liking to have meat and unlimited drink brought for him into the parlour, she directed the servant to supply him with a glass of sherry and a couple of biscuits. He had come an hour before the time named, and there, with nothing to cheer him beyond these slight creature comforts, he was left to wait all alone till Lord Fawn should be ready to see him.

Andy had seen lords before. Lords are not rarer in Ayrshire than in other Scotch counties; and then, had

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not Lord George de Bruce Carruthers been staying at Portray half the winter? But Lord George was not to Andy a real lord, and then a lord down in his own county was so much less to him than a lord up in London. And this lord was a lord of Parliament, and a government lord, and might probably have the power of hanging such a one as Andy Gowran were he to commit perjury, or say anything which the lord might choose to call perjury. What it was that Lord Fawn wished him to say, he could not make himself sure. That the lord's sister wished him to prove Lady Eustace to be all that was bad, he knew very well. But he thought that he was able to perceive that the brother and sister were not at one, and more than once during his journey up to London he had almost made up his mind that he would turn tail and go back to Portray. No doubt there was enmity between him and his mistress; but then his mistress did not attempt to hurt him even though he had insulted her grossly; and were she to tell him to leave her service, it would be from Mr. John Eustace, and not from Mrs. Hittaway, that he must look for the continuation of his employment. Nevertheless he had taken Mrs. Hittaway's money and there he was.

At half-past seven Lord Fawn was brought into the room by his sister, and Andy Gowran, rising from his chair, three times ducked his head. "Mr. Gowran," said Mrs. Hittaway, "my brother is desirous that you should tell him exactly what you have seen of Lady Eustace's conduct down at Portray. You may speak quite freely, and I know you will speak truly." Andy again ducked his head. "Frederic," continued the lady, "I am sure that you may implicitly believe all

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that Mr. Gowran will say to you." Then Mrs. Hittaway left the room, as her brother had expressly stipulated that she should do.

Lord Fawn was quite at a loss how to begin, and Andy was by no means prepared to help him. "If I am rightly informed," said the lord, "you have been for many years employed on the Portray property?"

"A' my life, so please your lairdship."

"Just so; just so. And of course interested in the welfare of the Eustace family?"

"Nae doobt, my laird, nae doobt; vera interasted indeed."

"And being an honest man, have felt sorrow that the Portray property should — should — should — that anything bad should happen to it." Andy nodded his head, and Lord Fawn perceived that he was nowhere near the beginning of his matter. "Lady Eustace is at present your mistress?"

"Just in a fawshion, my laird, as a mon may say. That is she is, and she is nae. There 's a mony things at Portray as ha' to be lookit after."

"She pays you your wages?" said Lord Fawn shortly.

"Eh — wages! Yes, my laird, she does a' that."

"Then she 's your mistress." Andy again nodded his head, and Lord Fawn again struggled to find some way in which he might approach the subject. "Her cousin, Mr. Greystock, has been staying at Portray lately?"

"More coothie than coosinly," said Andy, winking his eye.

It was dreadful to Lord Fawn that the man should wink his eye at him. He did not quite understand

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what Andy had last said, but he did understand that some accusation as to indecent familiarity with her cousin was intended to be brought by this Scotch steward against the woman to whom he had engaged himself. Every feeling of his nature revolted against the task before him, and he found that on trial it became absolutely impracticable. He could not bring himself to inquire minutely as to poor Lizzie's flirting down among the rocks. He was weak and foolish, and in many respects ignorant, but he was a gentleman. As he got nearer to the point which it had been intended that he should reach, the more he hated Andy Gowran, and the more he hated himself for having submitted to such contact. He paused a moment and then he declared that the conversation was at an end. "I think that will do, Mr. Gowran," he said. "I don't know that you can tell me anything I want to hear. I think you had better go back to Scotland." So saying, he left Andy alone and stalked up to the drawing-room. When he entered it both Mr. Hittaway and his sister were there. "Clara," he said very sternly, "you had better send some one to dismiss that man. I shall not speak to him again."

Lord Fawn did not speak to Andy Gowran again, but Mrs. Hittaway did. After a faint and futile endeavour made by her to ascertain what had taken place in the parlour down-stairs, she descended and found Andy seated in his chair, still holding his hat in his hand, as stiff as a wax figure. He had been afraid of the lord, but as soon as the lord had left him he was very angry with the lord. He had been brought up all that way to tell his story to the lord, and the lord had gone away without hearing a word of it, had gone away and had

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absolutely insulted him, had asked him who paid him his wages, and had then told him that Lady Eustace was his mistress. Andy Gowran felt strongly that this was not that kind of confidential usage which he had had a right to expect. And after his experience of the last hour and a half, he did not at all relish his renewed solitude in that room. "A drap of puir thin liquor — poored out too — in a weeny glass nae deeper than an egg shell, and twa cookies; that's what she ca'ed rafrashment!" It was thus that Andy afterwards spoke to his wife of the hospitalities offered to him in Warwick Square, regarding which his anger was especially hot, in that he had been treated like a child or a common labourer, instead of having the decanter left with him to be used at his own discretion. When, therefore, Mrs. Hittaway returned to him, the awe with which new circumstances and the lord had filled him was fast vanishing and giving place to that stubborn indignation against people in general, which was his normal condition. "I suppose I 'm jist to gang bock again to Portrae, Mrs. Heetaway, and that 'll be a' you 'll want o' me?" This he said the moment the lady entered the room.

But Mrs. Hittaway did not want to lose his services quite so soon. She expressed regret that her brother should have found himself unable to discuss a subject that was naturally so very distasteful to him, and begged Mr. Gowran to come to her again the next morning. "What I saw wi' my ain twa e'es, Mrs. Heetaway, I saw, and nane the less because his lairdship may nae find it jist tasteful, as your leddyship was saying. There were them twa a-colloguing, and a-seetting ilk in ither's laps a' o'er, and a-keessing — yes,

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my leddy, a-keessing as females, not to say males, ought nae to keess unless they be mon and wife — and then not amang the rocks, my leddy; and if his lairdship does nae care to hear tell o' it, and finds it nae tasteful, as your leddyship was saying, he should nae ha' sent for Andy Gowran a' the way from Portray, jist to tell him what he wanna hear, now I 'm come to tell 't to him!"

All this was said with so much unction that even Mrs. Hittaway herself found it to be not "tasteful." She shrunk and shivered under Mr. Gowran's eloquence, and almost repented of her zeal. But women, perhaps, feel less repugnance than men do at using ignoble assistance in the achievement of good purposes. Though Mrs. Hittaway shrunk and shivered under the strong action with which Mr. Gowran garnished his strong words, still she was sure of the excellence of her purpose; and believing that useful aid might still be obtained from Andy Gowran, and perhaps prudently anxious to get value in return for the cost of the journey up from Ayrshire, she made the man promise to return to her on the following morning.

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CHAPTER LX.

LET IT BE AS THOUGH IT HAD NEVER BEEN.

BETWEEN her son, and her married daughter, and Lucy Morris, poor Lady Fawn's life had become a burthen to her. Everything was astray, and there was no happiness or tranquillity at Fawn Court. Of all simply human creeds the strongest existing creed for the present in the minds of the Fawn ladies, was that which had reference to the general iniquity of Lizzie Eustace. She had been the cause of all these sorrows, and she was hated so much the more because she had not been proved to be iniquitous before all the world. There had been a time when it seemed to be admitted that she was so wicked in keeping the diamonds in opposition to the continued demands made for them by Mr. Camperdown, that all people would be justified in dropping her, and Lord Fawn among the number. But since the two robberies public opinion had veered round three or four points in Lizzie's favour and people were beginning to say that she had been ill-used. Then had come Mrs. Hittaway's evidence as to Lizzie's wicked doings down in Scotland — the wicked doings which Andy Gowran had described with a vehemence so terribly moral — and that which had been at first, as it were, added to the diamonds, as a supplementary weight thrown into the scale so that Lizzie's iniquities might bring her absolutely to the ground, had gradually

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assumed the position of being the first charge against her. Lady Fawn had felt no aversion to discussing the diamonds. When Lizzie was called a "thief," and a "robber," and a "swindler," by one or another of the ladies of the family — who, in using those strong terms, whispered the words as ladies are wont to do when they desire to lessen the impropriety of the strength of their language by the gentleness of the tone in which the words are spoken — when Lizzie was thus described in Lady Fawn's hearing in her own house, she had felt no repugnance to it. It was well that the fact should be known, so that everybody might be aware that her son was doing right in refusing to marry so wicked a lady. But when the other thing was added to it; when the story was told of what Mr. Gowran had seen among the rocks, and when gradually that became the special crime which was to justify her son in dropping the lady's acquaintance, then Lady Fawn became very unhappy, and found the subject to be, as Mrs. Hittaway had described it, very distasteful.

And this trouble hit Lucy Morris as hard as it did Lord Fawn. If Lizzie Eustace was unfit to marry Lord Fawn because of these things, then was Frank Greystock not only unfit to marry Lucy, but most unlikely to do so, whether fit or unfit. For a week or two Lady Fawn had allowed herself to share Lucy's joy, and to believe that Mr. Greystock would prove himself true to the girl whose heart he had made all his own; but she had soon learned to distrust the young member of Parliament who was always behaving insolently to her son, who spent his holidays down with Lizzie Eustace, who never visited and rarely wrote to the girl he had promised to marry, and as to whom

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all the world agreed in saying that he was far too much in debt to marry any woman who had not means to help him. It was all sorrow and vexation together; and yet when her married daughter would press the subject upon her, and demand her co-operation, she had no power of escaping.

"Mamma," Mrs. Hittaway had said, "Lady Glencora Palliser has been with her, and everybody is taking her up, and if her conduct down in Scotland is n't proved, Frederic will be made to marry her."

"But what can I do, my dear?" Lady Fawn had asked, almost in tears.

"Insist that Frederic shall know the whole truth," replied Mrs. Hittaway with energy. "Of course it is very disagreeable. Nobody can feel it more than I do. It is horrible to have to talk about such things, and to think of them."

"Indeed it is, Clara, very horrible."

"But anything, mamma, is better than that Frederic should be allowed to marry such a woman as that. It must be proved to him — how unfit she is to be his wife." With the view of carrying out this intention, Mrs. Hittaway had, as we have seen, received Andy Gowran at her own house; and with the same view she took Andy Gowran the following morning down to Richmond.

Mrs. Hittaway, and her mother, and Andy were closeted together for half an hour, and Lady Fawn suffered grievously. Lord Fawn had found that he could n't hear the story, and he had not heard it. He had been strong enough to escape, and had, upon the whole, got the best of it in the slight skirmish which had taken place between him and the Scotch-

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man, but poor old Lady Fawn could not escape. Andy was allowed to be eloquent, and the whole story was told to her, though she would almost sooner have been flogged at a cart's tail than have heard it. Then "rafrashments" were administered to Andy of a nature which made him prefer Fawn Court to Warwick Square, and he was told that he might go back to Portray as soon as he pleased.

When he was gone, Mrs. Hittaway opened her mind to her mother altogether. "The truth is, mamma, that Frederic will marry her."

"But why? I thought that he had declared that he would give it up. I thought that he had said so to herself."

"What of that, if he retracts what he said? He is so weak. Lady Glencora Palliser has made him promise to go and see her; and he is to go to-day. He is there now, probably, at this very moment. If he had been firm, the thing was done. After all that has taken place, nobody would ever have supposed that his engagement need go for anything. But what can he say to her now that he is in with her, except just do the mischief all over again? I call it quite wicked in that woman's interfering. I do, indeed! She's a nasty, insolent, impertinent creature; that's what she is. After all the trouble I've taken, she comes and undoes it all with one word."

"What can we do, Clara?"

"Well; I do believe that if Frederic could be made to act as he ought to do, just for a while, she would marry her cousin, Mr. Greystock, and then there would be an end of it altogether. I really think that she likes him best, and from all that I can hear she would take

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him now, if Frederic would only keep out of the way. As for him, of course he is doing his very best to get her. He has not one shilling to rub against another, and is over head and ears in debt."

"Poor Lucy!" ejaculated Lady Fawn.

"Well, yes; but really that is a matter of course. I always thought, mamma, that you and Amelia were a little wrong to coax her up in that belief."

"But, my dear, the man proposed for her in the plainest possible manner. I saw his letter."

"No doubt; men do propose. We all know that. I 'm sure I don't know what they get by it, but I suppose it amuses them. There used to be a sort of feeling that if a man behaved badly something would be done to him; but that 's all over now. A man may propose to whom he likes, and if he chooses to say afterwards that it does n't mean anything, there 's nothing in the world to bring him to book."

"That 's very hard," said the elder lady, of whom everybody said that she did not understand the world as well as her daughter.

"The girls — they all know that it is so, and I suppose it comes to the same thing in the long run. The men have to marry, and what one girl loses another girl gets."

"It will kill Lucy."

"Girls ain't killed so easy, mamma — not now-a-days. Saying that it will kill her won't change the man's nature. It was n't to be expected that such a man as Frank Greystock, in debt, and in Parliament, and going to all the best houses, should marry your governess. What was he to get by it? That 's what I want to know."

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"I suppose he loved her."

"Laws, mamma, how antediluvian you are! No doubt he did like her — after his fashion; though what he saw in her, I never could tell. I think Miss Morris would make a very nice wife for a country clergyman who did n't care how poor things were. But she has no style; and as far as I can see she has no beauty. Why should such a man as Frank Greystock tie himself by the leg for ever to such a girl as that? But, mamma, he does n't mean to marry Lucy Morris. Would he have been going on in that way with his cousin down in Scotland had he meant it? He means nothing of the kind. He means to marry Lady Eustace's income if he can get it; and she would marry him before the summer, if only we could keep Frederic away from her."

Mrs. Hittaway demanded from her mother that in season and out of season she should be urgent with Lord Fawn, impressing upon him the necessity of waiting, in order that he might see how false Lady Eustace was to him; and also that she should teach Lucy Morris how vain were all her hopes. If Lucy Morris would withdraw her claims altogether the thing might probably be more quickly and more surely managed. If Lucy could be induced to tell Frank that she withdrew her claim, and that she saw how impossible it was that they should ever be man and wife, then — so argued Mrs. Hittaway — Frank would at once throw himself at his cousin's feet, and all the difficulty would be over. The abominable, unjustifiable, and insolent interference of Lady Glencora just at the present moment would be the means of undoing all the good that had been done, unless it could be neutralised by some such activity as this. The necklace had abso-

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lutely faded away into nothing. The sly creature was almost becoming a heroine on the strength of the necklace. The very mystery with which the robberies were pervaded was acting in her favour. Lord Fawn would absolutely be made to marry her — forced into it by Lady Glencora and that set — unless the love affair between her and her cousin, of which Andy Gowran was able to give such sufficient testimony, could in some way be made available to prevent it.

The theory of life and system on which social matters should be managed, as displayed by her married daughter, was very painful to poor old Lady Fawn. When she was told that under the new order of things promises from gentlemen were not to be looked upon as binding, that love was to go for nothing, that girls were to be made contented by being told that when one lover was lost another could be found, she was very unhappy. She could not disbelieve it all, and throw herself back upon her faith in virtue, constancy, and honesty. She rather thought that things had changed for the worse since she was young, and that promises were not now as binding as they used to be. She herself had married into a liberal family, had a liberal son, and would have called herself a Liberal; but she could not fail to hear from others, her neighbours, that the English manners, and English principles, and English society were all going to destruction in consequence of the so-called liberality of the age. Gentlemen, she thought, certainly did do things which gentlemen would not have done forty years ago; and as for ladies — they, doubtless, were changed altogether. Most assuredly she could not have brought an Andy

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Gowran to her mother to tell such tales in their joint presence as this man had told!

Mrs. Hittaway had ridiculed her for saying that poor Lucy would die when forced to give up her lover. Mrs. Hittaway had spoken of the necessity of breaking up that engagement without a word of anger against Frank Greystock. According to Mrs. Hittaway's views Frank Greystock had amused himself in the most natural way in the world when he asked Lucy to be his wife. A governess like Lucy had been quite foolish to expect that such a man as Greystock was in earnest. Of course she must give up her lover; and if there must be blame she must blame herself for her folly! Nevertheless, Lady Fawn was so soft-hearted that she believed that the sorrow would crush Lucy, even if it did not kill her.

But not the less was it her duty to tell Lucy what she thought to be the truth. The story of what had occurred among the rocks at Portray was very disagreeable, but she believed it to be true. The man had been making love to his cousin after his engagement to Lucy. And then, was it not quite manifest that he was neglecting poor Lucy in every way? He had not seen her for nearly six months. Had he intended to marry her, would he not have found a home for her at the deanery? Did he in any respect treat her as he would treat the girl whom he intended to marry? Putting all these things together, Lady Fawn thought that she saw that Lucy's case was hopeless; and, so thinking, wrote to her the following letter:

"FAWN COURT, 3d March, 18—.

"DEAREST LUCY: I have so much to say to you that I did think of getting Lady Linlithgow to let you come

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to us here for a day, but I believe it will perhaps be better that I should write. I think you leave Lady Linlithgow after the first week in April, and it is quite necessary that you should come to some fixed arrangement as to the future. If that were all, there need not be any trouble, as you will come here, of course. Indeed, this is your natural home, as we all feel; and I must say that we have missed you most terribly since you went, not only for Cecilia and Nina, but for all of us. And I don't know that I should write at all if it was n't for something else, that must be said sooner or later; because, as to your coming here in April, that is so much a matter of course. The only mistake was, that you should ever have gone away. So we shall expect you here on whatever day you may arrange with Lady Linlithgow as to leaving her." The poor, dear lady went on repeating her affectionate invitation, because of the difficulty she encountered in finding words with which to give the cruel counsel which she thought that it was her duty to offer.

"And now, dearest Lucy, I must say what I believe to be the truth about Mr. Greystock. I think that you should teach yourself to forget him, or at any rate, that you should teach yourself to forget the offer which he made to you last autumn. Whether he was or was not in earnest then, I think that he has now determined to forget it. I fear there is no doubt that he has been making love to his cousin, Lady Eustace. You well know that I should not mention such a thing, if I had not the strongest possible grounds to convince me that I ought to do so. But, independent of this, his conduct to you during the last six months has been such as to make us all feel sure that the engagement is

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distasteful to him. He has probably found himself so placed that he cannot marry without money, and has wanted the firmness, or perhaps you will say the hardness of heart, to say so openly. I am sure of this, and so is Amelia, that it will be better for you to give the matter up altogether, and to come here and recover the blow among friends who will be as kind to you as possible. I know all that you will feel, and you have my fullest sympathy; but even such sorrows as that are cured by time, and by the mercy of God, which is not only infinite, but all-powerful.

"Your most affectionate friend,

"C. FAWN."

Lady Fawn, when she had written her letter, discussed it with Amelia, and the two together agreed that Lucy would never surmount the ill effects of the blow which was thus prophesied. "As to saying it will kill her, mamma," said Amelia, "I don't believe in that. If I were to break my leg, the accident might shorten my life, and this may shorten hers. It won't kill her in any other way. But it will alter her altogether. Nobody ever used to make herself happy so easily as Lucy Morris, but all that will be gone now."

When Lucy received the letter, the immediate effect upon her, the effect which came from the first reading of it, was not very great. She succeeded for some half-hour in putting it aside, as referring to a subject on which she had quite made up her mind in a direction contrary to that indicated by her correspondent's advice. Lady Fawn told her that her lover intended to be false to her. She had thought the matter over very care-

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fully within the last day or two, and had altogether made up her mind that she would continue to trust her lover. She had abstained from sending to him the letter which she had written, and had abstained on that resolution. Lady Fawn, of course, was as kind and friendly as a friend could be. She loved Lady Fawn dearly. But she was not bound to think Lady Fawn right, and in this instance she did not think Lady Fawn right. So she folded up the letter and put it in her pocket.

But by putting the letter into her pocket she could not put it out of her mind. Though she had resolved, of what use to her was a resolution in which she could not trust? Day had passed by after day, week after week, and month after month, and her very soul within her had become sad for want of seeing this man, who was living almost in the next street to her. She was ashamed to own to herself how many hours she had sat at the window, thinking that, perhaps, he might walk before the house in which he knew that she was immured. And, even had it been impossible that he should come to her, the post was open to him. She had scorned to write to him oftener than he would write to her, and now their correspondence had dwindled almost to nothing. He knew as well as did Lady Fawn when the period of her incarceration in Lady Linlithgow's dungeon would come to an end; and he knew, too, how great had been her hope that she might be accepted as a guest at the deanery when that period should arrive. He knew that she must look for a new home, unless he would tell her where she should live. Was it likely, was it possible, that he should be silent so long if he still intended to make her his wife? No doubt he

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had come to remember his debts, to remember his ambition, to think of his cousin's wealth, and to think also of his cousin's beauty. What right had she ever had to hope for such a position as that of his wife, she who had neither money nor beauty, she who had nothing to give him in return for his name and the shelter of his house beyond her mind and her heart? As she thought of it all, she looked down upon her faded gray frock, and stood up that she might glance at her features in the glass; and she saw how small she was and insignificant, and reminded herself that all she had in the world was a few pounds which she had saved and was still saving in order that she might go to him with decent clothes upon her back. Was it reasonable that she should expect it?

But why had he come to her and made her thus wretched? She could acknowledge to herself that she had been foolish, vain, utterly ignorant of her own value in venturing to hope; perhaps unmaidenly in allowing it to be seen that she had hoped; but what was he in having first exalted her before all her friends, and then abasing her so terribly and bringing her to such utter shipwreck? From spoken or written reproaches she could of course abstain. She would neither write or speak any; but from unuttered reproaches how could she abstain? She had called him a traitor once in playful, loving irony, during those few hours in which her love had been to her a luxury that she could enjoy. But now he was a traitor indeed. Had he left her alone she would have loved him in silence, and not have been wretched in her love. She would, she knew, in that case, have had vigour enough and sufficient strength of character to

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bear her burden without outward signs of suffering, without any inward suffering that would have disturbed the current of her life. But now everything was over with her. She had no thought of dying, but her future life was a blank to her.

She came down-stairs to sit at lunch with Lady Linlithgow, and the old woman did not perceive that anything was amiss with her companion. Further news had been heard of Lizzie Eustace, and of Lord Fawn, and of the robberies, and the countess declared how she had read in the newspapers that one man was already in custody for the burglary at the house in Hertford street. From that subject she went on to tidings which had reached her from her old friend Lady Clantantram that the Fawn marriage was on again. "Not that I believe it, my dear; because I think that Mr. Greystock has made it quite safe in that quarter." All this Lucy heard, and never showed by a single sign, or by a motion of a muscle, that she was in pain. Then Lady Linlithgow asked her what she meant to do after the 5th of April. "I don't see at all why you should n't stay here, if you like it, Miss Morris; that is, if you have abandoned the stupid idea of an engagement with Frank Greystock." Lucy smiled, and even thanked the countess, and said that she had made up her mind to go back to Richmond for a month or two, till she could get another engagement as a governess. Then she returned to her room and sat again at her window, looking out upon the street.

What did it matter now where she went? And yet she must go somewhere, and do something. There remained to her the wearisome possession of herself, and while she lived she must eat, and have clothes,

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and require shelter. She could not dawdle out a bitter existence under Lady Fawn's roof, eating the bread of charity, hanging about the rooms and shrubberies useless and idle. How bitter to her was that possession of herself, as she felt that there was nothing good to be done with the thing so possessed! She doubted even whether ever again she could become serviceable as a governess, and whether the energy would be left to her of earning her bread by teaching adequately the few things that she knew. But she must make the attempt, and must go on making it, till God in his mercy should take her to himself.

And yet but a few months since life had been so sweet to her! As she felt this she was not thinking of those short days of excited feverish bliss, in which she had believed that all the good things of the world were to be showered into her lap; but of previous years in which everything had been with her as it was now — with the one exception that she had not then been deceived. She had been full of smiles, and humour, and mirth, absolutely happy among her friends, though conscious of the necessity of earning her bread by the exercise of a most precarious profession, while elated by no hope. Though she had loved the man and had been hopeless, she was happy. But now, surely, of all maidens, and of all women, she was the most forlorn.

Having once acceded to the truth of Lady Fawn's views, she abandoned all hope. Everybody said so, and it was so. There was no word from any side to encourage her. The thing was done and over, and she would never mention his name again. She would simply beg of all the Fawns that no allusion might be made to him in her presence. She would never blame him, and

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certainly she would never praise him. As far as she could rule her tongue, she would never have his name upon her lips again.

She thought for a time that she would send the letter which she had already written. Any other letter she could not bring herself to write. Even to think of him was an agony to her; but to communicate her thoughts to him was worse than agony. It would be almost madness. What need was there for any letter? If the thing was done it was done. Perhaps there remained with her, staying by her without her own knowedge, some faint spark of hope, that even yet he might return to her. At last she resolved that there should be no letter, and she destroyed that which she had written.

But she did write a note to Lady Fawn, in which she gratefully accepted her old friend's kindness till such time as she could "find a place." "As to that other subject," she said, "I know that you are right. Please let it all be as though it had never been."

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CHAPTER LXI.

LIZZIE'S GREAT FRIEND.

THE Saturday morning came at last for which Lord Fawn had made his appointment with Lizzie, and a very important day it was in Hertford street, chiefly on account of his lordship's visit, but also in respect to other events which crowded themselves into the day. In the telling of our tale we have gone a little in advance of this, as it was not till the subsequent Monday that Lady Linlithgow read in the newspaper, and told Lucy, how a man had been arrested on account of the robbery. Early on the Saturday morning Sir Griffin Tewett was in Hertford street, and, as Lizzie afterwards understood, there was a terrible scene between both him and Lucinda and him and Mrs. Carbuncle. She saw nothing of it herself, but Mrs. Carbuncle brought her the tidings. For the last few days Mrs. Carbuncle had been very affectionate in her manner to Lizzie, thereby showing a great change; for nearly the whole of February the lady, who in fact owned the house, had hardly been courteous to her remunerative guest, expressing more than once a hint that the arrangement which had brought them together had better come to an end. "You see, Lady Eustace," Mrs. Carbuncle had once said, "the trouble about these robberies is almost too much for me." Lizzie, who was ill at the time, and still trembling with constant fear on account

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of the lost diamonds, had taken advantage of her sick condition, and declined to argue the question of her removal. Now she was supposed to be convalescent, but Mrs. Carbuncle had returned to her former ways of affection. No doubt there was cause for this — cause that was patent to Lizzie herself. Lady Glencora Palliser had called, which thing alone was felt by Lizzie to alter her position altogether. And then, though her diamonds were gone, and though the thieves who had stolen them were undoubtedly aware of her secret as to the first robbery, though she had herself told that secret to Lord George, whom she had not seen since she had done so, in spite of all these causes for trouble, she had of late gradually found herself to be emerging from the state of despondency into which she had fallen while the diamonds were in her own custody. She knew that she was regaining her ascendancy; and therefore when Mrs. Carbuncle came to tell her of the grievous things which had been said down-stairs between Sir Griffin and his mistress, and to consult her as to the future, Lizzie was not surprised.

"I suppose the meaning of it is that the match must be off," said Lizzie.

"Oh dear no; pray don't say anything so horrid after all that I have gone through. Don't suggest anything of that kind to Lucinda."

"But surely after what you 've told me now, he 'll never come here again."

"Oh yes, he will. There 's no danger about his coming back. It 's only a sort of a way he has."

"A very disagreeable way," said Lizzie.

"No doubt, Lady Eustace. But then you know you can't have it all sweet. There must be some things

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disagreeable. As far as I can learn the property will be all right after a few years, and it is absolutely indispensable that Lucinda should do something. She has accepted him and she must go on with it."

"She seems to me to be very unhappy, Mrs. Carbuncle."

"That was always her way. She was never gay and cheery like other girls. I have never known her once to be what you would call happy."

"She likes hunting."

"Yes, because she can gallop away out of herself. I have done all I can for her, and she must go on with the marriage now. As for going back, it is out of the question. The truth is, we could n't afford it."

"Then you must keep him in a better humour."

"I am not so much afraid about him; but, dear Lady Eustace, we want you to help us a little."

"How can I help you?"

"You can, certainly. Could you lend me two hundred and fifty pounds just for six weeks?" Lizzie's face fell and her eyes became very serious in their aspect. Two hundred and fifty pounds! "You know you would have ample security. You need not give Lucinda her present till I 've paid you, and that will be forty-five pounds."

"Thirty-five," said Lizzie with angry decision.

"I thought we agreed upon forty-five when we settled about the servants' liveries; and then you can let the man at the stables know that I am to pay for the carriage and horses. You would n't be out of the money hardly above a week or so, and it might be the salvation of Lucinda just at present."

"Why don't you ask Lord George?"

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"Ask Lord George! He has n't got it. It 's much more likely that he should ask me. I don't know what 's come to Lord George this last month past. I did believe that you and he were to come together. I think these two robberies have upset him altogether. But, dear Lizzie, you can let me have it, can't you?"

Lizzie did not at all like the idea of lending money, and by no means appreciated the security now offered to her. It might be very well for her to tell the man at the stables that Mrs. Carbuncle would pay him her bill, but how would it be with her if Mrs. Carbuncle did not pay the bill? And as for her present to Lucinda — which was to have been a present, and regarded by the future Lady Tewett as a voluntary offering of good will and affection — she was altogether averse to having it disposed of in this fashion. And yet she did not like to make an enemy of Mrs. Carbuncle.

"I never was so poor in my life before, not since I was married," said Lizzie.

"You can't be poor, dear Lady Eustace."

"They took my money out of my desk, you know — ever so much."

"Forty-three pounds," said Mrs. Carbuncle, who was, of course, well instructed in all the details of the robbery.

"And I don't suppose you can guess what the autumn cost me at Portray. The bills are only coming in now, and really they sometimes so frighten me that I don't know what I shall do. Indeed I have n't got the money to spare."

"You 'll have every penny of it back in six weeks," said Mrs. Carbuncle, upon whose face a glow of anger was settling down. She quite intended to make herself

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very disagreeable to her "dear Lady Eustace" or her "dear Lizzie" if she did not get what she wanted; and she knew very well how to do it. It must be owned that Lizzie was afraid of the woman. It was almost impossible for her not to be afraid of the people with whom she lived. There were so many things against her; so many sources of fear! "I am quite sure you won't refuse me such a trifling favour as this," said Mrs. Carbuncle, with the glow of anger reddening more and more upon her brow.

"I don't think I have so much at the bankers," said Lizzie.

"They'll let you overdraw just as much as you please. If the check comes back that will be my look out." Lizzie had tried that game before, and knew that the bankers would allow her to overdraw. "Come, be a good friend and do it at once," said Mrs. Carbuncle.

"Perhaps I can manage a hundred and fifty," said Lizzie, trembling. Mrs. Carbuncle fought hard for the greater sum; but at last consented to take the less, and the check was written.

"This, of course, won't interfere with Lucinda's present," said Mrs. Carbuncle, "as we can make all this right by the horse and carriage account." To this proposition, however, Lady Eustace made no answer.

Soon after lunch, at which meal Miss Roanoke did not show herself, Lady Glencora Palliser was announced, and sat for about ten minutes in the drawing-room. She had come, she said, to give the Duke of Omnium's compliments to Lady Eustace, and to express a wish on the part of the duke that the lost diamonds might be recovered.

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"I doubt," said Lady Glencora, "whether there is any one in England except professed jewellers who knows so much about diamonds as his grace."

"Or who has so many," said Mrs. Carbuncle, smiling graciously.

"I don't know about that. I suppose there are family diamonds, though I have never seen them. But he sympathises with you completely, Lady Eustace.. I suppose there is hardly hope now of recovering them!" Lizzie smiled and shook her head. "Is n't it odd that they never should have discovered the thieves? I 'm told they have n't at all given it up, only, unfortunately they 'll never get back the necklace." She sat there for about a quarter of an hour, and then, as she took her leave, she whispered a few words to Lizzie. "He is to come and see you, is n't he?" Lizzie assented with a smile, but without a word. "I hope it will be all right," said Lady Glencora, and then she went.

Lizzie liked this friendship from Lady Glencora amazingly. Perhaps, after all, nothing more would ever be known about the diamonds, and they would simply be remembered as having added a peculiar and not injurious mystery to her life. Lord George knew, but then she trusted that a benevolent, true-hearted Corsair, such as was Lord George, would never tell the story against her. The thieves knew, but surely they, if not detected, would never tell. And if the story were told by thieves, or even by a Corsair, at any rate half the world would not believe it. What she had feared — had feared till the dread had nearly overcome her — was public exposure at the hands of the police. If she could escape that, the world might still

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be bright before her. And the interest taken in her by such persons as the Duke of Omnium and Lady Glencora was evidence not only that she had escaped it hitherto, but also that she was in a fair way to escape it altogether. Three weeks ago she would have given up half her income to have been able to steal out of London without leaving a trace behind her. Three weeks ago Mrs. Carbuncle was treating her with discourtesy, and she was left alone nearly the whole day in her sick bedroom. Things were going better with her now. She was recovering her position. Mr. Camperdown, who had been the first to attack her, was, so to say, "nowhere." He had acknowledged himself beaten. Lord Fawn, whose treatment to her had been so great an injury, was coming to see her that very day. Her cousin Frank, though he had never offered to marry her, was more affectionate to her than ever. Mrs. Carbuncle had been at her feet that morning borrowing money. And Lady Glencora Palliser, the very leading star of fashion, had called upon her twice! Why should she succumb? She had an income of four thousand pounds a year, and she thought that she could remember that her aunt, Lady Linlithgow, had but seven hundred pounds. Lady Fawn with all her daughters had not near so much as she had. And she was beautiful, too, and young, and perfectly free to do what she pleased. No doubt the last eighteen months of her life had been made wretched by those horrid diamonds; but they were gone, and she had fair reason to hope that the very knowledge of them was gone also.

In this condition would it be expedient for her to accept Lord Fawn when he came? She could not, of

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course, be sure that any renewed offer would be the result of his visit: but she thought it probable that with care she might bring him to that. Why should he come to her if he himself had no such intention? Her mind was quite made up on this point, that he should be made to renew his offer; but whether she would renew her acceptance was quite another question. She had sworn to her cousin Frank that she would never do so, and she had sworn also that she would be revenged on this wretched lord. Now would be her opportunity of accomplishing her revenge, and of proving to Frank that she had been in earnest. And she positively disliked the man. That probably did not go for much, but it went for something, even with Lizzie Eustace. Her cousin she did like, and Lord George. She hardly knew which was her real love, though no doubt she gave the preference greatly to her cousin, because she could trust him. And then Lord Fawn was very poor. The other two men were poor also; but their poverty was not so objectionable in Lizzie's eyes as were the respectable, close-fisted economies of Lord Fawn. Lord Fawn, no doubt, had an assured income and a real peerage, and could make her a peeress. As she thought of it all, she acknowledged that there was a great deal to be said on each side, and that the necessity of making up her mind then and there was a heavy burthen upon her.

Exactly at the hour named Lord Fawn came, and Lizzie was, of course, found alone. That had been carefully provided. He was shown up, and she received him very gracefully. She was sitting, and she rose from her chair, and put out her hand for him to take. She spoke no word of greeting, but looked at

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him with a pleasant smile, and stood for a few seconds with her hand in his. He was awkward, and much embarrassed, and she certainly had no intention of lessening his embarrassment. "I hope you are better than you have been," he said at last.

"I am getting better, Lord Fawn. Will you not sit down?" He then seated himself, placing his hat beside him on the floor, but at the moment could not find words to speak. "I have been very ill."

"I have been so sorry to hear it."

"There has been much to make me ill — has there not?"

"About the robbery, you mean?"

"About many things. The robbery has been by no means the worst, though no doubt it frightened me much. There were two robberies, Lord Fawn."

"Yes, I know that."

"And it was very terrible. And then, I had been threatened with a lawsuit. You have heard that, too?"

"Yes — I had heard it."

"I believe they have given that up now. I understand from my cousin, Mr. Greystock, who has been my truest friend in all my troubles, that the stupid people have found out at last that they had not a leg to stand on. I dare say you have heard that, Lord Fawn?"

Lord Fawn certainly had heard, in a doubtful way, the gist of Mr. Dove's opinion, namely, that the necklace could not be claimed from the holder of it as an heirloom attached to the Eustace family. But he had heard at the same time that Mr. Camperdown was as confident as ever that he could recover the property by claiming it after another fashion. Whether or no

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that claim had been altogether abandoned, or had been allowed to fall into abeyance because of the absence of the diamonds, he did not know, nor did any one know — Mr. Camperdown himself having come to no decision on the subject. But Lord Fawn had been aware that his sister had of late shifted the ground of her inveterate enmity to Lizzie Eustace, making use of the scene which Mr. Gowran had witnessed, in lieu of the lady's rapacity in regard to the necklace. It might therefore be assumed, Lord Fawn thought and feared, that his strong ground in regard to the necklace had been cut from under his feet. But still, it did not behoove him to confess that the cause which he had always alleged as the ground for his retreat from the engagement was no cause at all. It might go hard with him should an attempt be made to force him to name another cause. He knew that he would lack the courage to tell the lady that he had heard from his sister that one Andy Gowran had witnessed a terrible scene down among the rocks at Portray. So he sat silent, and made no answer to Lizzie's first assertion respecting the diamonds.

But the necklace was her strong point, and she did not intend that he should escape the subject. "If I remember right, Lord Fawn, you yourself saw that wretched old attorney once or twice on the subject?"

"I did see Mr. Camperdown, certainly. He is my own family lawyer."

"You were kind enough to interest yourself about the diamonds — were you not?" She asked him this as a question, and then waited for a reply. "Was it not so?"

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"Yes, Lady Eustace; it was so."

"They were of great value, and it was natural," continued Lizzie. "Of course you interested yourself. Mr. Camperdown was full of awful threats against me — was he not? I don't know what he was not going to do. He stopped me in the street as I was driving to the station in my own carriage, when the diamonds were with me; which was a very strong measure, I think. And he wrote me ever so many, oh, such horrid letters. And he went about telling everybody that it was an heirloom — did n't he? You know all that, Lord Fawn?"

"I know that he wanted to recover them."

"And did he tell you that he went to a real lawyer, somebody who really knew about it, Mr. Turbot, or Turtle, or some such name as that, and the real lawyer told him that he was all wrong, and that the necklace could n't be an heirloom at all, because it belonged to me, and that he had better drop his lawsuit altogether? Did you hear that?"

"No; I did not hear that."

"Ah, Lord Fawn, you dropped your inquiries just at the wrong place. No doubt you had too many things to do in Parliament and the Government to go on with them; but if you had gone on, you would have learned that Mr. Camperdown had just to give it up, because he had been wrong from beginning to end." Lizzie's words fell from her with extreme rapidity, and she had become almost out of breath from the effects of her own energy.

Lord Fawn felt strongly the necessity of clinging to the diamonds as his one great and sufficient justification. "I thought," said he, "that Mr. Camperdown had

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abandoned his action for the present because the jewels had been stolen."

"Not a bit of it," said Lizzie, rising suddenly to her legs. "Who says so? Who dares to say so? Whoever says so is — is a story-teller. I understand all about that. The action could go on just the same, and I could be made to pay for the necklace out of my own income if it had n't been my own. I am sure, Lord Fawn, such a clever man as you, and one who has always been in the Government and in Parliament, can see that. And will anybody believe that such an enemy as Mr. Camperdown has been to me, persecuting me in every possible way, telling lies about everybody, who tried to prevent my dear, darling husband from marrying me, that he would n't go on with it if he could?"

"Mr. Camperdown is a very respectable man, Lady Eustace."

"Respectable! Talk to me of respectable after all that he has made me suffer! As you were so fond of making inquiries, Lord Fawn, you ought to have gone on with them. You never would believe what my cousin said."

"Your cousin always behaved very badly to me."

"My cousin, who is a brother rather than a cousin, has known how to protect me from the injuries done to me, or rather, has known how to take my part when I have been injured. My lord, as you have been unwilling to believe him, why have you not gone to that gentleman who, as I say, is a real lawyer? I don't know, my lord, that it need have concerned you at all, but as you began, you surely should have gone on with it. Don't you think so?" She was still standing up

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and, small as was her stature, was almost menacing the unfortunate Under-Secretary of State, who was still seated in his chair. "My lord," continued Lizzie, "I have had great wrong done me."

"Do you mean by me?"

"Yes, by you. Who else has done it?"

"I do not think that I have done wrong to any one. I was obliged to say that I could not recognise those diamonds as the property of my wife."

"But what right had you to say so? I had the diamonds when you asked me to be your wife."

"I did not know it."

"Nor did you know that I had this little ring upon my finger. Is it fit that you, or that any man should turn round upon a lady and say to her that your word is to be broken, and that she is to be exposed before all her friends, because you have taken a fancy to dislike her ring or her brooch? I say, Lord Fawn, it was no business of yours, even after you were engaged to me. What jewels I might have, or not have, was no concern of yours till after I had become your wife. Go and ask all the world if it is not so? You say that my cousin affronts you because he takes my part, like a brother. Ask any one else. Ask any lady you may know. Let us name some one to decide between us which of us has been wrong. Lady Glencora Palliser is a friend of yours, and her husband is in the Government. Shall we name her? It is true, indeed, that her uncle, the Duke of Omnium, the grandest and greatest of English noblemen, is specially interested on my behalf." This was very fine in Lizzie. The Duke of Omnium she had never seen; but his name had been mentioned to her by Lady Glencora, and she was quick to use it.

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"I can admit of no reference to any one," said Lord Fawn.

"And I then, what am I to do? I am to be thrown over simply because your lordship — chooses to throw me over. Your lordship will admit no reference to any one! Your lordship makes inquiries as long as an attorney tells you stories against me, but drops them at once when the attorney is made to understand that he is wrong. Tell me this, sir. Can you justify yourself in your own heart?"

Unfortunately for Lord Fawn, he was not sure that he could justify himself. The diamonds were gone, and the action was laid aside, and the general opinion which had prevailed a month or two since, that Lizzie had been disreputably concerned in stealing her own necklace, seemed to have been laid aside. Lady Glencora and the duke went for almost as much with Lord Fawn as they did with Lizzie. No doubt the misbehaviour down among the rocks was left to him; but he had that only on the evidence of Andy Gowran, and even Andy Gowran's evidence he had declined to receive otherwise than second-hand. Lizzie, too, was prepared with an answer to this charge, an answer which she had already made more than once, though the charge was not positively brought against her, and which consisted in an assertion that Frank Greystock was her brother rather than her cousin. Such brotherhood was not altogether satisfactory to Lord Fawn, when he came once more to regard Lizzie Eustace as his possible future wife; but still the assertion was an answer, and one that he could not altogether reject.

It certainly was the case that he had again begun to

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think what would be the result of a marriage with Lady Eustace. He must sever himself altogether from Mrs. Hittaway, and must relax the closeness of his relations with Fawn Court. He would have a wife respecting whom he himself had spread evil tidings, and the man whom he most hated in the world would be his wife's favourite cousin or, so to say, brother. He would, after a fashion, be connected with Mrs. Carbuncle, Lord George de Bruce Carruthers, and Sir Griffin Tewett, all of whom he regarded as thoroughly disreputable. And, moreover, at his own country house at Portray, as in such case it would be, his own bailiff or steward would be the man who had seen, what he had seen. These were great objections; but how was he to avoid marrying? He was engaged to her. How, at any rate, was he to escape from the renewal of his engagement at this moment? He had more than once positively stated that he was deterred from marrying her only by her possession of the diamonds. The diamonds were now gone.

Lizzie was still standing, waiting for an answer to her question. Can you justify yourself in your own heart? Having paused for some seconds she repeated her question in a stronger and more personal form. "Had I been your sister, Lord Fawn, and had another man behaved to me as you have now done, would you say that he had behaved well and that she had no ground for complaint? Can you bring yourself to answer that question honestly?"

"I hope I shall answer no question dishonestly."

"Answer it then. No; you cannot answer it, because you would condemn yourself. Now, Lord Fawn, what do you mean to do?"

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"I had thought, Lady Eustace, that any regard which you might ever have entertained for me ——"

"Well; what had you thought of my regard?"

"That it had been dissipated."

"Have I told you so? Has any one come to you from me with such a message?"

"Have you not received attentions from any one else?"

"Attentions; what attentions? I have received plenty of attentions, most flattering attentions. I was honoured even this morning by a most gratifying attention on the part of his grace the Duke of Omnium."

"I did not mean that."

"What do you mean, then? I am not going to marry the Duke of Omnium because of his attention, nor any one else. If you mean, sir, after the other inquiries you have done me the honour to make, to throw it in my face now, that I have — have in any way rendered myself unworthy of the position of your wife because people have been civil and kind to me in my sorrow, you are a greater dastard than I took you to be. Tell me at once, sir, whom you mean."

It is hardly too much to say that the man quailed before her. And it certainly is not too much to say that, had Lizzie Eustace been trained as an actress, she would have become a favourite with the town. When there came to her any fair scope for acting, she was perfect. In the ordinary scenes of ordinary life, such as befell her during her visit to Fawn Court, she could not acquit herself well. There was no reality about her, and the want of it was strangely plain to most unobservant eyes. But give her a part to play that

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required exaggerated, strong action, and she hardly ever failed. Even in that terrible moment, when, on her return from the theatre, she thought that the police had discovered her secret about the diamonds, though she nearly sank through fear, she still carried on her acting in the presence of Lucinda Roanoke; and when she had found herself constrained to tell the truth to Lord George Carruthers, the power to personify a poor, weak, injured creature was not wanting to her. The reader will not think that her position in society at the present moment was very well established, will feel, probably, that she must still have known herself to be on the brink of social ruin. But she had now fully worked herself up to the necessities of the occasion, and was as able to play her part as any actress that ever walked the boards. She had called him a dastard, and now stood looking him in the face. "I did n't mean anybody in particular," said Lord Fawn.

"Then what right can you have to ask me whether I have received attentions? Had it not been for the affectionate attention of my cousin, Mr. Greystock, I should have died beneath the load of sorrow you have heaped upon me." This she said quite boldly, and yet the man she named was he of whom Andy Gowran told his horrid story, and whose love-making to Lizzie had, in Mrs. Hittaway's opinion, been sufficient to atone for any falling off of strength in the matter of the diamonds.

"A rumour reached me," said Lord Fawn, plucking up his courage, "that you were engaged to marry your cousin."

"Then rumour lied, my lord. And he or she who repeated the rumour to you, lied also. And any he or

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she who repeats it again will go on with the lie." Lord Fawn's brow became very black. The word "lie" itself was offensive to him, offensive even though it might not be applied directly to himself; but he still quailed, and was unable to express his indignation — as he had done to poor Lucy Morris, his mother's governess. "And now let me ask, Lord Fawn, on what ground you and I stand together. When my friend Lady Glencora asked me, only this morning, whether my engagement with you was still an existing fact, and brought me the kindest possible message on the same subject from her uncle, the duke, I hardly knew what answer to make her." It was not surprising that Lizzie in her difficulties should use her new friend, but perhaps she overdid the friendship a little. "I told her that we were engaged, but that your lordship's conduct to me had been so strange that I hardly knew how to speak of you among my friends."

"I thought I explained myself to your cousin."

"My cousin certainly did not understand your explanation."

Lord Fawn was certain that Greystock had understood it well; and Greystock had in return insulted him because the engagement was broken off. But it is impossible to argue on facts with a woman who has been ill-used. "After all that has passed perhaps we had better part," said Lord Fawn.

"Then I shall put the matter into the hands of the Duke of Omnium," said Lizzie boldly. "I will not have my whole life ruined, my good name blasted ——"

"I have not said a word to injure your good name."

"On what plea, then, have you dared to take upon

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yourself to put an end to an engagement which was made at your own pressing request — which was, of course, made at your own request? On what ground do you justify such conduct? You are a Liberal, Lord Fawn; and everybody regards the Duke of Omnium as the head of the liberal nobility in England. He is my friend, and I shall put the matter into his hands." It was probably from her cousin Frank that Lizzie had learned that Lord Fawn was more afraid of the leaders of his own party than of any other tribunal upon earth — or perhaps elsewhere.

Lord Fawn felt the absurdity of the threat, and yet it had effect upon him. He knew that the Duke of Omnium was a worn-out old debauchee, with one foot in the grave, who was looked after by two or three women who were only anxious that he should not disgrace himself by some absurdity before he died. Nevertheless the Duke of Omnium, or the duke name, was a power in the nation. Lady Glencora was certainly very powerful, and Lady Glencora's husband was Chancellor of the Exchequer. He did not suppose that the duke cared in the least whether Lizzie Eustace was or was not married; but Lady Glencora had certainly interested herself about Lizzie, and might make London almost too hŏt to hold him if she chose to go about everywhere saying that he ought to marry the lady. And in addition to all this prospective grief, there was the trouble of the present moment. He was in Lizzie's own room — fool that he had been to come there — and he must get out as best he could. "Lady Eustace," he said, "I am most anxious not to behave badly in this matter."

"But you are behaving badly — very badly."

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"With your leave I will tell you what I would suggest. I will submit to you in writing my opinion on this matter—" Lord Fawn had been all his life submitting his opinion in writing, and thought that he was rather a good hand at the work. "I will then endeavour to explain to you the reasons which make me think that it will be better for us both that our engagement should be at an end. If, after reading it, you shall disagree with me, and still insist on the right which I gave you when I asked you to become my wife, I will then perform the promise which I certainly made." To this most foolish proposal on his part, Lizzie of course acquiesced. She acquiesced, and bade him farewell with her sweetest smile. It was now manifest to her that she could have her husband, or her revenge, just as she might prefer.

This had been a day of triumph to her, and she was talking of it in the evening triumphantly to Mrs. Carbuncle, when she was told that a policeman wanted to see her down-stairs! Oh, those wretched police! Again all the blood rushed to her head and nearly killed her. She descended slowly; and was then informed by a man, not dressed like Bunfit, in plain clothes, but with all the paraphernalia of a policeman's uniform, that her late servant, Patience Crabstick, had given herself up as Queen's evidence, and was now in custody in Scotland Yard. It had been thought right that she should be so far informed; but the man was able to tell her nothing further.

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CHAPTER LXII.

"YOU KNOW WHERE MY HEART IS."

On the Sunday following, Frank, as usual, was in Hertford street. He had become almost a favourite with Mrs. Carbuncle; and had so far ingratiated himself even with Lucinda Roanoke that, according to Lizzie's report, he might if so inclined rob Sir Griffin of his prize without much difficulty. On this occasion he was unhappy and in low spirits; and when questioned on the subject made no secret of the fact that he was harassed for money. "The truth is, I have overdrawn my bankers by five hundred pounds, and they have, as they say, ventured to remind me of it. I wish they were not venturesome quite so often; for they reminded me of the same fact about a fortnight ago."

"What do you do with your money, Mr. Greystock?" asked Mrs. Carbuncle laughing.

"Muddle it away, paying my bills with it, according to the very, very old story. The fact is I live in that detestable noman's land, between respectability and insolvency, which has none of the pleasure of either. I am fair game for every creditor, as I am supposed to pay my way, and yet I never can pay my way."

"Just like my poor dear father," said Lizzie.

"Not exactly, Lizzie. He managed much better, and never paid anybody. If I could only land on terra firma, one side or the other, I should n't much

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care which. As it is I have all the recklessness, but none of the carelessness of a hopelessly insolvent man. And it is so hard with us. Attorneys owe us large sums of money, and we can't dun them very well. I have a lot of money due to me from rich men, who don't pay me simply because they don't think that it matters. I talk to them grandly, and look big, as though money was the last thing I thought of, when I am longing to touch my hat and ask them as a great favour to settle my little bill." All this time Lizzie was full of matter which she must impart to her cousin, and could impart to him only in privacy.

It was absolutely necessary that she should tell him what she had heard of Patience Crabstick. In her heart of hearts she wished that Patience Crabstick had gone off safely with her plunder to the Antipodes. She had no wish to get back what had been lost, either in the matter of the diamonds or of the smaller things taken. She had sincerely wished that the police might fail in all their endeavours, and that the thieves might enjoy perfect security with their booty. She did not even begrudge Mr. Benjamin the diamonds — or Lord George, if in truth Lord George had been the last thief. The robbery had enabled her to get the better of Mr. Camperdown, and apparently of Lord Fawn; and had freed her from the custody of property which she had learned to hate. It had been a very good robbery. But now these wretched police had found Patience Crabstick and would disturb her again!

Of course she must tell her cousin. He must hear the news, and it would be better that he should hear it from her than from others. This was Sunday, and she thought he would be sure to know the truth on the fol-

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lowing Monday. In this she was right: for on the Monday old Lady Linlithgow saw it stated in the newspapers that an arrest had been made. "I have something to tell you," she said, as soon as she had succeeded in finding herself alone with him.

"Anything about the diamonds?"

"Well, no; not exactly about the diamonds; though perhaps it is. But first, Frank, I want to say something else to you."

"Not about the diamonds?"

"Oh no; not at all. It is this. You must let me lend you that five hundred pounds you want."

"Indeed, you shall do no such thing. I should not have mentioned it to you if I had not thought that you were one of the insolvent yourself. You were in debt yourself when we last talked about money."

"So I am; and that horrid woman, Mrs. Carbuncle, has made me lend her one hundred and fifty pounds. But it is so different with you, Frank."

"Yes; my needs are greater than hers."

"What is she to me? while you are everything! Things can't be so bad with me but what I can raise five hundred pounds. After all, I am not really in debt, for a person with my income; but if I were, still my first duty would be to help you if you want help."

"Be generous first, and just afterwards. That's it; is n't it, Lizzie? But indeed, under no circumstances could I take a penny of your money. There are some persons from whom a man can borrow and some from whom he cannot. You are clearly one of those from whom I cannot borrow."

"Why not?"

"Ah, one can't explain these things. It simply is so.

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Mrs. Carbuncle was quite the natural person to borrow your money, and it seems that she has complied with nature. Some Jew who wants thirty per cent. is the natural person for me. All these things are arranged, and it is of no use disturbing the arrangements and getting out of course. I shall pull through. And now let me know your own news."

"The police have taken Patience."

"They have, have they? Then at last we shall know all about the diamonds." This was gall to poor Lizzie. "Where did they get her?"

"Ah! I don't know that."

"And who told you?"

"A policeman came here last night and said so. She is going to turn against the thieves and tell all that she knows. Nasty, mean creature."

"Thieves are nasty, mean creatures generally. We shall get it all out now — as to what happened at Carlisle and what happened here. Do you know that everybody believes, up to this moment, that your dear friend Lord George de Bruce sold the diamonds to Mr. Benjamin the jeweller?"

Lizzie could only shrug her shoulders. She herself, among many doubts, was upon the whole disposed to think as everybody thought. She did believe — as far as she believed anything in the matter — that the Corsair had determined to become possessed of the prize from the moment that he saw it in Scotland; that the Corsair arranged the robbery in Carlisle, and that again he arranged the robbery in the London house as soon as he learned from Lizzie where the diamonds were placed. To her mind this had been the most ready solution of the mystery, and when she found that other

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people almost regarded him as the thief, her doubts became a belief. And she did not in the least despise or dislike him or condemn him for what he had done. Were he to come to her and confess it all, telling his story in such a manner as to make her seem to be safe for the future, she would congratulate him and accept him at once as her own dear, expected Corsair. But if so, he should not have bungled the thing. He should have managed his subordinates better than to have one of them turn evidence against him. He should have been able to get rid of a poor weak female like Patience Crabstick. Why had he not sent her to New York, or — or — or anywhere? If Lizzie were to hear that Lord George had taken Patience out to sea in a yacht — somewhere among the bright islands of which she thought so much — and dropped the girl overboard, tied up in a bag, she would regard it as a proper Corsair arrangement. Now she was angry with Lord George because her trouble was coming back upon her. Frank had suggested that Lord George was the robber in chief, and Lizzie merely shrugged her shoulders. "We shall know all about it now," said he triumphantly.

"I don't know that I want to know any more about it. I have been so tortured about these wretched diamonds that I never wish to hear them mentioned again. I don't care who has got them. My enemies used to think that I loved them so well that I could not bear to part with them. I hated them always, and never took any pleasure in them. I used to think that I would throw them into the sea; and when they were gone I was glad of it."

"Thieves ought to be discovered, Lizzie, for the good of the community."

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"I don't care for the community. What has the community ever done for me? And now I have something else to tell you. Ever so many people came yesterday as well as that wretched policeman. Dear Lady Glencora was here again."

"They 'll make a Radical of you among them, Lizzie."

"I don't care a bit about that. I 'd just as soon be a Radical as a stupid old Conservative. Lady Glencora has been most kind, and she brought me the dearest message from the Duke of Omnium. The duke had heard how ill I had been treated."

"The duke is doting."

"It is so easy to say that when a man is old. I don't think you know him, Frank."

"Not in the least; nor do I wish."

"It is something to have the sympathy of men high placed in the world. And as to Lady Glencora, I do love her dearly. She just comes up to my beau ideal of what a woman should be — disinterested, full of spirit, affectionate, with a dash of romance about her."

"A great dash of romance, I fancy."

"And a determination to be something in the world. Lady Glencora Palliser is something."

"She is awfully rich, Lizzie."

"I suppose so. At any rate, that is no disgrace. And then, Frank, somebody else came."

"Lord Fawn was to have come."

"He did come."

"And how did it go between you?"

"Ah, that will be so difficult to explain. I wish you had been behind the curtain to hear it all. It is so

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necessary that you should know, and yet it is so hard to tell. I spoke up to him, and was quite high-spirited."

"I dare say you were."

"I told him out bravely of all the wrong he had done me. I did not sit and whimper, I can assure you. Then he talked about you — of your attentions."

Frank Greystock, of course, remembered the scene among the rocks, and Mr. Gowran's wagging head and watchful eyes. At the time he had felt certain that some use would be made of Andy's vigilance, though he had not traced the connection between the man and Mrs. Hittaway. If Lord Fawn had heard of the little scene, there might doubtless be cause for him to talk of "attentions." "What did it matter to him?" asked Frank. "He is an insolent ass — as I have told him once, and shall have to tell him again."

"I think it did matter, Frank."

"I don't see it a bit. He had resigned his rights — whatever they were."

"But I had not accepted his resignation — as they say in the newspapers — nor have I now."

"You would still marry him?"

"I don't say that, Frank. This an important business, and let us go through it steadily. I would certainly like to have him again at my feet. Whether I would deign to lift him up again is another thing. Is not that natural, after what he has done to me?"

"Woman's nature."

"And I am a woman. Yes, Frank. I would have him again at my disposal — and he is so. He is to write me a long letter; so like a Government-man — is n't it? And he has told me already what he is to put

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in the letter. They always do, you know. He is to say that he 'll marry me if I choose."

"He has promised to say that?"

"When he said that he would come, I made up my mind that he should not go out of the house till he had promised that. He could n't get out of it. What had I done?" Frank thought of the scene among the rocks. He did not, of course, allude to it, but Lizzie was not so reticent. "As to what that old rogue saw down in Scotland, I don't care a bit about it, Frank. He has been up in London, and telling them all, no doubt. Nasty, dirty eavesdropper! But what does it come to? Psha! When he mentioned your name I silenced him at once. What could I have done, unless I had had some friend? At any rate, he is to ask me again in writing — and then what shall I say?"

"You must consult your own heart."

"No, Frank; I need not do that. Why do you say so?"

"I know not what else to say."

"A woman can marry without consulting her heart. Women do so every day. This man is a lord, and has a position. No doubt I despise him thoroughly — utterly. I don't hate him, because he is not worth being hated."

"And yet you would marry him?"

"I have not said so. I will tell you this truth, though perhaps you will say it is not feminine. I would fain marry some one. To be as I have been for the last two years is not a happy condition."

"I would not marry a man I despised."

"Nor would I — willingly. He is honest and respect-

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able; and in spite of all that has come and gone would, I think, behave well to a woman when she was once his wife. Of course, I would prefer to marry a man that I could love. But if that is impossible, Frank ——"

"I thought that you had determined that you would have nothing to do with this lord."

"I thought so too. Frank, you have known all that I have thought, and all that I have wished. You talk to me of marrying where my heart has been given. Is it possible that I should do so?"

"How am I to say?"

"Come, Frank, be true with me. I am forcing myself to speak truth to you. I think that between you and me, at any rate, there should be no words spoken that are not true. Frank, you know where my heart is." As she said this she stood over him and laid her hand upon his shoulder. "Will you answer me one question?"

"If I can, I will."

"Are you engaged to marry Lucy Morris?"

"I am."

"And you intend to marry her?" To this question he made no immediate answer. "We are old enough now, Frank, to know that something more than what you call heart is wanted to make us happy when we marry. I will say nothing hard of Lucy, though she be my rival."

"You can say nothing hard of her. She is perfect."

"We will let that pass, though it is hardly kind of you, just at the present moment. Let her be perfect. Can you marry this perfection without a sixpence — you that are in debt, and who never could save a sixpence in your life? Would it be for her good — or for

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yours? You have done a foolish thing, sir, and you know that you must get out of it."

"I know nothing of the kind."

"You cannot marry Lucy Morris. That is the truth. My present need makes me bold. Frank, shall I be your wife? Such a marriage will not be without love, at any rate on one side, though there be utter indifference on the other."

"You know I am not indifferent to you," said he, with wicked weakness.

"Now at any rate," she continued, "you must understand what must be my answer to Lord Fawn. It is you that must answer Lord Fawn. If my heart is to be broken, I may as well break it under his roof as another."

"I have no roof to offer you," he said.

"But I have one for you," she said, throwing her arm round his neck. He bore her embrace for a minute, returning it with the pressure of his arm; and then, escaping from it, seized his hat and left her standing in the room.

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CHAPTER LXIII.

THE CORSAIR IS AFRAID.

On the following morning — Monday morning — there appeared in one of the daily newspapers the paragraph of which Lady Linlithgow had spoken to Lucy Morris. "We are given to understand" — newspapers are very frequently given to understand — "that a man well-known to the London police as an accomplished housebreaker, has been arrested in reference to the robbery which was effected on the 30th of January last at Lady Eustace's house in Hertford street. No doubt the same person was concerned in the robbery of her ladyship's jewels at Carlisle on the night of the 8th of January. The mystery which has so long enveloped these two affairs, and which has been so discreditable to the metropolitan police, will now probably be cleared up." There was not a word about Patience Crabstick in this; and, as Lizzie observed, the news brought by the policeman on Saturday night referred only to Patience, and said nothing of the arrest of any burglar. The ladies in Hertford street scanned the sentence with the greatest care, and Mrs. Carbuncle was very angry because the house was said to be Lizzie's house.

"It was n't my doing," said Lizzie.

"The policeman came to you about it."

"I did n't say a word to the man, and I did n't want him to come."

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"I hope it will be all found out now," said Lucinda.

"I wish it were all clean forgotten," said Lizzie.

"It ought to be found out," said Mrs. Carbuncle. "But the police should be more careful in what they say. I suppose we shall all have to go before the magistrates again."

Poor Lizzie felt that fresh trouble was certainly coming upon her. She had learned now that the crime for which she might be prosecuted and punished was that of perjury, that even if everything was known, she could not be accused of stealing, and that if she could only get out of the way till the wrath of the magistrate and policemen should have evaporated, she might possibly escape altogether. At any rate, they could not take her income away from her. But how could she get out of the way, and how could she endure to be cross-examined, and looked at, and inquired into, by all those who would be concerned in the matter? She thought that, if only she could have arranged her matrimonial affairs before the bad day came upon her, she could have endured it better. If she might be allowed to see Lord George, she could ask for advice — could ask for advice, not as she was always forced to do from her cousin, on a false statement of facts, but with everything known and declared.

On that very day Lord George came to Hertford street. He had been there more than once, perhaps half a dozen times, since the robbery; but on all these occasions Lizzie had been in bed, and he had declined to visit her in her chamber. In fact, even Lord George had become somewhat afraid of her since he had been told the true story as to the necklace at Carlisle. That story he had heard from herself, and

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he had also heard from Mr. Benjamin some other little details as to her former life. Mr. Benjamin, whose very close attention had been drawn to the Eustace diamonds, had told Lord George how he had valued them at her ladyship's request, and had caused an iron case to be made for them, and how her ladyship had on one occasion endeavoured to sell the necklace to him. Mr. Benjamin, who certainly was intimate with Lord George, was very fond of talking about the diamonds, and had once suggested to his lordship that, were they to become his lordship's by marriage, he, Benjamin, might be willing to treat with his lordship. In regard to treating with her ladyship, Mr. Benjamin acknowledged that he thought it would be too hazardous. Then came the robbery of the box, and Lord George was all astray. Mr. Benjamin was for a while equally astray, but neither friend believed in the other friend's innocence. That Lord George should suspect Mr. Benjamin was quite natural. Mr. Benjamin hardly knew what to think; hardly gave Lord George credit for the necessary courage, skill, and energy. But at last, as he began to put two and two together, he divined the truth, and was enabled to set the docile Patience on the watch over her mistress's belongings. So it had been with Mr. Benjamin, who at last was able to satisfy Mr. Smiler and Mr. Cann that he had been no party to their cruel disappointment at Carlisle. How Lord George had learned the truth has been told; the truth as to Lizzie's hiding the necklace under her pillow and bringing it up to London in her desk. But of the facts of the second robbery he knew nothing up to this morning. He almost suspected that Lizzie had herself again been at work,

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and he was afraid of her. He had promised her that he would take care of her, had perhaps said enough to make her believe that some day he would marry her. He hardly remembered what he had said; but he was afraid of her. She was so wonderfully clever that, if he did not take care, she would get him into some mess from which he would be unable to extricate himself.

He had never whispered her secret to any one; and had still been at a loss about the second robbery, when he too saw the paragraph in the newspaper. He went direct to Scotland Yard and made inquiry there. His name had been so often used in the affair, that such inquiry from him was justified.

"Well, my lord; yes; we have found out something," said Bunfit. "Mr. Benjamin is off, you know."

"Benjamin off?"

"Cut the painter, my lord, and started. But what 's the good, now we has the wires?"

"And who were the thieves?"

"Ah, my lord, that 's telling. Perhaps I don't know. Perhaps I do. Perhaps two or three of us knows. You 'll hear all in good time, my lord." Mr. Bunfit wished to appear communicative because he knew but little himself. Gager, in the meanest possible manner, had kept the matter very close; but the fact that Mr. Benjamin had started suddenly on foreign travel had become known to Mr. Bunfit.

Lord George had been very careful, asking no question about the necklace; no question which would have shown that he knew that the necklace had been in Hertford street when the robbery took place there;

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but it seemed to him now that the police must be aware that it was so. The arrest had been made because of the robbery in Hertford street, and because of that arrest Mr. Benjamin had taken his departure. Mr. Benjamin was too big a man to have concerned himself deeply in the smaller matters which had then been stolen.

From Scotland Yard Lord George went direct to Hertford street. He was in want of money, in want of a settled home, in want of a future income, and altogether unsatisfied with his present mode of life. Lizzie Eustace, no doubt, would take him, unless she had told her secret to some other lover. To have his wife, immediately on her marriage, or even before it, arraigned for perjury, would not be pleasant. There was very much in the whole affair of which he would not be proud as he led his bride to the altar; but a man does not expect to get four thousand pounds a year for nothing. Lord George, at any rate, did not conceive himself to be in a position to do so. Had there not been something crooked about Lizzie, a screw loose, as people say, she would never have been within his reach. There are men who always ride lame horses, and yet see as much of the hunting as others. Lord George, when he had begun to think that, after the tale which he had forced her to tell him, she had caused the diamonds to be stolen by her own maid out of her own desk, became almost afraid of her. But now, as he looked at the matter again and again, he believed that the second robbery had been genuine. He did not quite make up his mind, but he went to Hertford street resolved to see her.

He asked for her, and was shown at once into her

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own sitting-room. "So you have come at last," she said.

"Yes; I 've come at last. It would not have done for me to come up to you when you were in bed. Those women down-stairs would have talked about it everywhere."

"I suppose they would," said Lizzie almost piteously.

"It would n't have been at all wise after all that has been said. People would have been sure to suspect that I had got the things out of your desk."

"Oh, no; not that."

"I was n't going to run the risk, my dear." His manner to her was anything but civil, anything but complimentary. If this was his Corsair humour, she was not sure that a Corsair might be agreeable to her. "And now tell me what you know about this second robbery."

"I know nothing, Lord George."

"Oh, yes, you do. You know something. You know, at any rate, that the diamonds were there."

"Yes; I know that."

"And that they were taken?"

"Of course they were taken."

"You are sure of that?" There was something in his manner absolutely insolent to her. Frank was affectionate, and even Lord Fawn treated her with deference. "Because, you know, you have been very clever. To tell you the truth, I did not think at first that they had been really stolen. It might, you know, have been a little game to get them out of your own hands, between you and your maid."

"I don't know what you take me for, Lord George."

"I take you for a lady who for a long time got the

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better of the police and the magistrates, and who managed to shift all the trouble off your own shoulders on to those of other people. You have heard that they have taken one of the thieves?"

"And they have got the girl."

"Have they? I didn't know that. That scoundrel Benjamin has levanted too."

"Levanted!" said Lizzie, raising both her hands.

"Not an hour too soon, my lady. And now what do you mean to do?"

"What ought I to do?"

"Of course the whole truth will come out."

"Must it come out?"

"Not a doubt of that. How can it be helped?"

"You won't tell. You promised that you would not."

"Psha; promised! If they put me in a witness-box of course I must tell. When you come to this kind of work, promises don't go for much. I don't know that they ever do. What is a broken promise?"

"It's a story," said Lizzie, in innocent amazement.

"And what was it you told when you were upon your oath at Carlisle; and again when the magistrate came here?"

"Oh, Lord George; how unkind you are to me!"

"Patience Crabstick will tell it all, without any help from me. Don't you see that the whole thing must be known? She'll say where the diamonds were found; and how did they come there, if you didn't put them there? As for telling, there'll be telling enough. You've only two things to do."

"What are they, Lord George?"

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"Go off, like Mr. Benjamin; or else make a clean breast of it. Send for John Eustace and tell him the whole. For his brother's sake he 'll make the best of it. It will all be published, and then perhaps there will be an end of it."

"I could n't do that, Lord George," said Lizzie, bursting into tears.

"You ask me, and I can only tell you what I think. That you should be able to keep the history of the diamonds a secret, does not seem to me to be upon the cards. No doubt people who are rich, and are connected with rich people, and have great friends — who are what the world call swells — have great advantages over their inferiors when they get into trouble. You are the widow of a baronet, and you have an uncle a bishop, and another a dean, and a countess for an aunt. You have a brother-in-law and a first-cousin in Parliament, and your father was an admiral. The other day you were engaged to marry a peer."

"Oh yes," said Lizzie, "and Lady Glencora Palliser is my particular friend."

"She is; is she? So much the better. Lady Glencora, no doubt, is a very swell among swells."

"The Duke of Omnium would do anything for me," said Lizzie with enthusiasm.

"If you were nobody, you would of course be indicted for perjury, and would go to prison. As it is, if you will tell all your story to one of your swell friends, I think it very likely that you may be pulled through. I should say that Mr. Eustace, or your cousin Greystock, would be the best."

"Why could n't you do it? You know it all. I told

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you because — because — because I thought you would be the kindest to me."

"You told me, my dear, because you thought it would not matter much with me, and I appreciate the compliment. I can do nothing for you. I am not near enough to those who wear wigs."

Lizzie did not above half understand him — did not at all understand him when he spoke of those who wore wigs, and was quite dark to his irony about her great friends — but she did perceive that he was in earnest in recommending her to confess. She thought about it for a moment in silence, and the more she thought the more she felt that she could not do it. Had he not suggested a second alternative — that she should go off, like Mr. Benjamin? It might be possible that she should go off, and yet be not quite like Mr. Benjamin. In that case ought she not to go under the protection of her Corsair? Would not that be the proper way of going?

"Might I not go abroad, just for a time?" she asked.

"And so let it blow over?"

"Just so, you know."

"It is possible that you might," he said. "Not that it would blow over altogether. Everybody would know it. It is too late now to stop the police, and if you meant to be off you should be off at once — to-day or to-morrow."

"Oh dear!"

"Indeed, there's no saying whether they will let you go. You could start now, this moment; and if you were at Dover could get over to France. But when once it is known that you had the necklace all that time in your own desk, any magistrate, I imagine, could

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stop you. You 'd better have some lawyer you can trust; not that blackguard Mopus."

Lord George had certainly brought her no comfort. When he told her that she might go at once if she chose, she remembered, with a pang of agony, that she had already overdrawn her account at the bankers. She was the actual possessor of an income of four thousand pounds a year, and now, in her terrible strait, she could not stir because she had no money with which to travel. Had all things been well with her, she could, no doubt, have gone to her bankers and have arranged this little difficulty. But as it was she could not move, because her purse was empty.

Lord George sat looking at her and thinking whether he would make the plunge and ask her to be his wife, with all her impediments and drawbacks about her. He had been careful to reduce her to such a condition of despair that she would undoubtedly have accepted him so that she might have some one to lean upon in her trouble; but as he looked at her he doubted. She was such a mass of deceit that he was afraid of her. She might say that she would marry him, and then, when the storm was over, refuse to keep her word. She might be in debt almost to any amount. She might be already married for anything that he knew. He did know that she was subject to all manner of penalties for what she had done. He looked at her and told himself that she was very pretty. But in spite of her beauty his judgment went against her. He did not dare to share his — even his boat, with so dangerous a fellow-passenger.

"That's my advice," he said, getting up from his chair.

"Are you going?"

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"Well; yes; I don't know what else I can do for you."

"You are so unkind." He shrugged his shoulders, just touched her hand, and left the room without saying another word to her.

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CHAPTER LXIV.

LIZZIE'S LAST SCHEME.

LIZZIE, when she was left alone, was very angry with the Corsair — in truth more sincerely angry than she had ever been with any of her lovers, or perhaps with any human being. Sincere, true, burning wrath was not the fault to which she was most exposed. She could snap and snarl and hate, and say severe things. She could quarrel, and fight, and be malicious. But to be full of real wrath was uncommon with her. Now she was angry. She had been civil, more than civil, to Lord George. She had opened her house to him and her heart. She had told him her great secret. She had implored his protection. She had thrown herself into his arms. And now he had rejected her. That he should have been rough to her was only in accordance with the poetical attributes which she had attributed to him. But his roughness should have been streaked with tenderness. He should not have left her roughly. In the whole interview he had not said a loving word to her. He had given her advice — which might be good or bad — but he had given it as to one whom he despised. He had spoken to her throughout the interview exactly as he might have spoken to Sir Griffin Tewett. She could not analyse her feelings thoroughly, but she felt that because of what had passed between them, by reason of his knowledge

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of her secret, he had robbed her of all that observance which was due to her as a woman and a lady. She had been roughly used before, by people of inferior rank who had seen through her ways. Andrew Gowran had insulted her. Patience Crabstick had argued with her. Benjamin, the employer of thieves, had been familiar with her. But hitherto, in what she was pleased to call her own set, she had always been treated with that courtesy which ladies seldom fail to receive. She understood it all. She knew how much of mere word-service there often is in such complimentary usage. But, nevertheless, it implies respect and an acknowledgment of the position of her who is so respected. Lord George had treated her as one schoolboy treats another.

And he had not spoken to her one word of love. Love will excuse roughness. Spoken love will palliate even spoken roughness. Had he once called her his own Lizzie, he might have scolded her as he pleased — might have abused her to the top of his bent. But as there had been nothing of the manner of a gentleman to a lady, so also had there been nothing of the lover to his mistress. That dream was over. Lord George was no longer a Corsair, but a brute.

But what should she do? Even a brute may speak truth. She was to have gone to a theatre that evening with Mrs. Carbuncle, but she stayed at home thinking over her position. She heard nothing throughout the day from the police; and she made up her mind that, unless she were stopped by the police, she would go to Scotland on the day but one following. She thought that she was sure that she would do so; but of course she must be guided by events as they occurred. She

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wrote, however, to Miss Macnulty saying that she would come, and she told Mrs. Carbuncle of her proposed journey as that lady was leaving the house for the theatre. On the following morning, however, news came which again made her journey doubtful. There was another paragraph in the newspaper about the robbery, acknowledging the former paragraph to have been in some respect erroneous. "The accomplished housebreaker" had not been arrested. A confederate of the "accomplished housebreaker" was in the hands of the police, and the police were on the track of the "accomplished housebreaker" himself. Then there was a line or two alluding in a very mysterious way to the disappearance of a certain jeweller. Taking it altogether, Lizzie thought that there was ground for hope, and that at any rate there would be delay. She would perhaps put off going to Scotland for yet a day or two. Was it not necessary that she should wait for Lord Fawn's answer; and would it not be incumbent on her cousin Frank to send her some account of himself after the abrupt manner in which he had left her?

If in real truth she should be driven to tell her story to any one, and she began to think that she was so driven, she would tell it to him. She believed more in his regard for her than that of any other human being. She thought that he would in truth have been devoted to her, had he not become entangled with that wretched little governess. And she thought that if he could see his way out of that scrape, he would marry her even yet; would marry her, and be good to her, so that her dream of a poetical phase of life should not be altogether dissolved. After all, the diamonds were her own. She

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had not stolen them. When perplexed in the extreme by magistrates and policemen, with nobody near her whom she trusted to give her advice — for Lizzie now of course declared to herself that she had never for a moment trusted the Corsair — she had fallen into an error, and said what was not true. As she practised it before the glass, she thought that she could tell her story in a becoming manner, with becoming tears, to Frank Greystock. And were it not for Lucy Morris, she thought that he would take her with all her faults and all her burdens.

As for Lord Fawn, she knew well enough that, let him write what he would, and renew his engagement in what most formal manner might be possible, he would be off again when he learned the facts as to that night at Carlisle. She had brought him to succumb, because he could no longer justify his treatment of her by reference to the diamonds. But when once all the world should know that she had twice perjured herself, his justification would be complete and his escape would be certain. She would use his letter simply to achieve that revenge which she had promised herself. Her effort — her last final effort — must be made to secure the hand and heart of her cousin Frank. "Ah, 't is his heart I want," she said to herself.

She must settle something before she went to Scotland, if there was anything that could be settled. If she could only get a promise from Frank before all her treachery had been exposed, he probably would remain true to his promise. He would not desert her as Lord Fawn had done. Then, after much thinking of it, she resolved upon a scheme which, of all her schemes, was the wickedest. Whatever it might cost her, she would

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create a separation between Frank Greystock and Lucy Morris. Having determined upon this, she wrote to Lucy, asking her to call in Hertford street at a certain hour.

"DEAR LUCY: I particularly want to see you, on business. Pray come to me at twelve to-morrow. I will send the carriage for you, and it will take you back again. Pray do this. We used to love one another, and I am sure I love you still.

"Your affectionate old friend,

"LIZZIE."

As a matter of course, Lucy went to her. Lizzie, before the interview, studied the part she was to play with all possible care, even to the words which she was to use. The greeting was at first kindly, for Lucy had almost forgotten the bribe that had been offered to her, and had quite forgiven it. Lizzie Eustace never could be dear to her; but, so Lucy had thought during her happiness, this former friend of hers was the cousin of the man who was to be her husband, and was dear to him. Of course she had forgiven the offence. "And now, dear, I want to ask you a question," Lizzie said; "or rather, perhaps, not a question. I can do it better than that. I think that my cousin Frank once talked of — of making you his wife." Lucy answered not a word, but she trembled in every limb, and the colour came to her face. "Was it not so, dear?"

"What if it was? I don't know why you should ask me any question like that about myself."

"Is he not my cousin?"

"Yes, he is your cousin. Why don't you ask him? You see him every day, I suppose?"

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"Nearly every day."

"Why do you send for me, then?"

"It is so hard to tell you, Lucy. I have sent to you in good faith, and in love. I could have gone to you, only for the old vulture, who would not have let us had a word in peace. I do see him, constantly. And I love him dearly."

"That is nothing to me," said Lucy. Anybody hearing them, and not knowing them, would have said that Lucy's manner was harsh in the extreme.

"He has told me everything." Lizzie, when she said this, paused, looking at her victim. "He has told me things which he could not mention to you. It was only yesterday — the day before yesterday — that he was speaking to me of his debts. I offered to place all that I have at his disposal, so as to free him, but he would not take my money."

"Of course he would not."

"Not my money alone. Then he told me that he was engaged to you. He had never told me before, but yet I knew it. It all came out then. Lucy, though he is engaged to you, it is me that he loves."

"I don't believe it," said Lucy.

"You can't make me angry, Lucy, because my heart bleeds for you."

"Nonsense! trash! I don't want your heart to bleed. I don't believe you 've got a heart. You 've got money; I know that."

"And he has got none. If I did not love him, why should I wish to give him all that I have? Is not that disinterested?"

"No. You are always thinking of yourself. You could n't be disinterested."

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"And of whom are you thinking? Are you doing the best for him — a man in his position, without money, ambitious, sure to succeed, if want of money does not stop him — in wishing him to marry a girl with nothing? Cannot I do more for him than you can?"

"I could work for him on my knees, I love him so truly."

"Would that do him any service? He cannot marry you. Does he ever see you? Does he write to you as though you were to be his wife? Do you not know that it is all over? — that it must be over? It is impossible that he should marry you. But if you will give him back his word, he shall be my husband, and shall have all that I possess. Now, let us see who loves him best."

"I do," said Lucy.

"How will you show it?"

"There is no need that I should show it. He knows it. The only one in the world to whom I wish it to be known, knows it already well enough. Did you send to me for this?"

"Yes — for this."

"It is for him to tell me the tidings — not for you. You are nothing to me — nothing. And what you say to me now is all for yourself — not for him. But it is true that he does not see me. It is true that he does not write to me. You may tell him from me — for I cannot write to him myself — that he may do whatever is best for him. But if you tell him that I do not love him better than all the world, you will lie to him. And if you say that he loves you better than he does me, that also will be a lie. I know his heart."

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"But, Lucy—"

"I will hear no more. He can do as he pleases. If money be more to him than love and honesty, let him marry you. I shall never trouble him; he may be sure of that. As for you, Lizzie, I hope that we may never meet again."

She would not get into the Eustace-Carbuncle carriage, which was waiting for her at the door, but walked back to Bruton street. She did not doubt but that it was all over with her now. That Lizzie Eustace was an inveterate liar, she knew well; but she did believe that the liar had on this occasion been speaking truth. Lady Fawn was not a liar, and Lady Fawn had told her the same. And, had she wanted more evidence, did not her lover's conduct give it? "It is because I am poor," she said to herself—"for I know well that he loves me."

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CHAPTER LXV.

TRIBUTE.

LIZZIE put off her journey to Scotland from day to day, though her cousin Frank continually urged upon her the expediency of going. There were various reasons, he said, why she should go. Her child was there, and it was proper that she should be with her child. She was living at present with people whose reputation did not stand high, and as to whom all manner of evil reports were flying about the town. It was generally thought — so said Frank — that that Lord George de Bruce Carruthers had assisted Mr. Benjamin in stealing the diamonds, and Frank himself did not hesitate to express his belief in the accusation.

"Oh no, that cannot be," said Lizzie, trembling. But, though she rejected the supposition, she did not reject it very firmly. "And then, you know," continued Lizzie, "I never see him. I have actually only set eyes on him once since the second robbery, and then just for a minute. Of course I used to know him — down at Portray but now we are strangers." Frank went on with his objections. He declared that the manner in which Mrs. Carbuncle had got up the match between Lucinda Roanoke and Sir Griffin was shameful — all the world was declaring that it was shameful — that she had not a penny, that the girl was an adventurer, and that Sir Griffin was an obstinate, pig-

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headed, ruined idiot. It was expedient on every account that Lizzie should take herself away from that "lot." The answer that Lizzie desired to make was very simple. Let me go as your betrothed bride, and I will start to-morrow to Scotland or elsewhere, as you may direct. Let that little affair be settled, and I shall be quite as willing to get out of London as you can be to send me. But I am in such a peck of troubles that something must be settled. And as it seems that after all the police are still astray about the necklace, perhaps I need n't run away from them for a little while even yet. She did not say this. She did not even in so many words make the first proposition. But she did endeavour to make Frank understand that she would obey his dictation if he would earn the right to dictate. He either did not or would not understand her, and then she became angry with him — or pretended to be angry.

"Really, Frank," she said, "you are hardly fair to me."

"In what way am I unfair?"

"You come here and abuse all my friends, and tell me to go here and go there, just as though I were a child. And — and — and —"

"And what, Lizzie?"

"You know what I mean. You are one thing one day, and one another. I hope Miss Lucy Morris was quite well when you last heard from her?"

"You have no right to speak to me of Lucy — at least, not in disparagement."

"You are treating her very badly — you know that."

"I am."

"Then why don't you give it up? Why don't you

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let her have her chances — to do what she can with them? You know very well that you can't marry her. You know that you ought not to have asked her. You talk of Miss Roanoke and Sir Griffin Tewett. There are people quite as bad as Sir Griffin, or Mrs. Carbuncle either. Don't suppose I am speaking for myself. I 've given up all that idle fancy long ago. I shall never marry a second time myself. I have made up my mind to that. I have suffered too much already." Then she burst into tears.

He dried her tears and comforted her, and forgave all the injurious things she had said of him. It is almost impossible for a man — a man under forty and unmarried, and who is not a philosopher — to have familiar and affectionate intercourse with a beautiful young woman, and carry it on as he might do with a friend of the other sex. In his very heart Greystock despised this woman; he had told himself over and over again that were there no Lucy in the case he would not marry her; that she was affected, unreal — and in fact a liar in every word and look and motion which came from her with premeditation. Judging, not from her own account, but from circumstances as he saw them, and such evidence as had reached him, he did not condemn her in reference to the diamonds. He had never for a moment conceived that she had secreted them. He acquitted her altogether from those special charges which had been widely circulated against her; but nevertheless he knew her to be heartless and bad. He had told himself a dozen times that it would be well for him that she should be married and taken out of his hands. And yet he loved her after a fashion, and was prone to sit near her, and was

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fool enough to be flattered by her caresses. When she would lay her hand on his arm, a thrill of pleasure went through him. And yet he would willingly have seen any decent man take her and marry her, making a bargain that he should never see her again. Young or old, men are apt to become Merlins when they encounter Viviens. On this occasion he left her, disgusted indeed, but not having told her that he was disgusted. "Come again, Frank, to-morrow, won't you?" she said. He made her no promise as he went, nor had she expected it. He had left her quite abruptly the other day, and he now went away almost in the same fashion. But she was not surprised. She understood that the task she had in hand was one very difficult to be accomplished — and she did perceive in some dark way that, good as her acting was, it was not quite good enough. Lucy held her ground because she was real. You may knock about a diamond and not even scratch it, whereas paste in rough usage betrays itself. Lizzie, with all her self-assuring protestations, knew that she was paste, and knew that Lucy was real stone. Why could she not force herself to act a little better, so that the paste might be as good as the stone — might at least seem to be as good? "If he despises me now; what will he say when he finds it all out?" she asked herself.

As for Frank Greystock himself, though he had quite made up his mind about Lizzie Eustace, he was still in doubt about the other girl. At the present moment he was making over two thousand pounds a year, and yet was more in debt now than he had been a year ago. When he attempted to look at his affairs, he could not even remember what had become of his

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money. He did not gamble. He had no little yacht, costing him about six hundred a year. He kept one horse in London, and one only. He had no house. And when he could spare time from his work, he was generally entertained at the houses of his friends. And yet from day to day his condition seemed to become worse and worse. It was true that he never thought of half-a-sovereign; that in calling for wine at his club he was never influenced by the cost; that it seemed to him quite rational to keep a cab waiting for him half the day, that in going or coming he never calculated expense, that in giving an order to a tailor he never dreamed of anything beyond his own comfort. Nevertheless, when he recounted with pride his great economies, reminding himself that he, a successful man, with a large income and no family, kept neither hunters, nor yacht, nor moor, and that he did not gamble, he did think it very hard that he should be embarrassed. But he was embarrassed, and in that condition could it be right for him to marry a girl without a shilling?

In these days Mrs. Carbuncle was very urgent with her friend not to leave London till after the marriage. Lizzie had given no promise, had only been induced to promise that the loan of one hundred and fifty pounds should not be held to have any bearing on the wedding present to be made to Lucinda. That could be got on credit from Messrs. Harter and Benjamin; for though Mr. Benjamin was absent — on a little tour through Europe in search of precious stones in the cheap markets old Mr. Harter suggested — the business went on the same as ever. There was a good deal of consultation about the present, and Mrs. Carbuncle at last decided, no doubt with the concur-

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rence of Miss Roanoke, that it should consist simply of silver forks and spoons — real silver as far as the money would go. Mrs. Carbuncle herself went with her friend to select the articles — as to which perhaps we shall do her no injustice in saying that a ready sale, should such a lamentable occurrence ever become necessary, was one of the objects which she had in view. Mrs. Carbuncle's investigations as to the quality of the metal quite won Mr. Harter's respect; and it will probably be thought that she exacted no more than justice — seeing that the thing had become a matter of bargain — in demanding that the thirty-five pounds should be stretched to fifty, because the things were bought on long credit. "My dear Lizzie," Mrs. Carbuncle said, "the dear girl won't have an ounce more than she would have got, had you gone into another sort of shop with thirty-five sovereigns in your hand." Lizzie growled, but Mrs. Carbuncle's final argument was conclusive. "I 'll tell you what we 'll do," said she; "we 'll take thirty pounds down in ready money." There was no answer to be made to so reasonable a proposition.

The presents to be made to Lucinda were very much thought of in Hertford street at this time, and Lizzie — independently of any feeling that she might have as to her own contribution — did all she could to assist the collection of tribute. It was quite understood that as a girl can only be married once — for a widow's chance in such matters amounts to but little — everything should be done to gather toll from the tax-payers of society. It was quite fair on such an occasion that men should be given to understand that something worth having was expected — no trumpery thirty-shil-

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ling piece of crockery, no insignificant glass bottle, or fantastic paper-knife of no real value whatever, but got up just to put money into the tradesmen's hands. To one or two elderly gentlemen upon whom Mrs. Carbuncle had smiled, she ventured to suggest in plain words that a check was the most convenient *cadeau*. "What do you say to a couple of sovereigns?" one sarcastic old gentleman replied, upon whom probably Mrs. Carbuncle had not smiled enough. She laughed and congratulated her sarcastic friend upon his joke — but the two sovereigns were left upon the table, and went to swell the spoil.

"You must do something handsome for Lucinda," Lizzie said to her cousin.

"What do you call handsome?"

"You are a bachelor and a Member of Parliament. Say fifteen pounds."

"I 'll be —— if I do," said Frank, who was beginning to be very much disgusted with the house in Hertford street. "There 's a five-pound note, and you may do what you please with it." Lizzie gave over the five-pound note — the identical bit of paper that had come from Frank; and Mrs. Carbuncle, no doubt, did do what she pleased with it.

There was almost a quarrel because Lizzie, after much consideration, declared that she did not see her way to get a present from the Duke of Omnium. She had talked so much to Mrs. Carbuncle about the duke that Mrs. Carbuncle was almost justified in making the demand.

"It is n't the value, you know," said Mrs. Carbuncle; "neither I nor Lucinda would think of that; but it would look so well to have the dear duke's

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name on something." Lizzie declared that the duke was unapproachable on such subjects. "There you 're wrong," said Mrs. Carbuncle. "I happen to know there is nothing his grace likes so much as giving wedding presents." This was the harder upon Lizzie as she actually did succeed in saying such kind things about Lucinda that Lady Glencora sent Miss Roanoke the prettiest smelling-bottle in the world.

"You don't mean to say you 've given a present to the future Lady Tewett?" said Madame Max Goesler to her friend.

"Why not? Sir Griffin can't hurt me. When one begins to be good-natured why should n't one be good-natured all round?" Madame Max remarked that it might perhaps be preferable to put an end to good-nature altogether. "There I dare say you 're right, my dear," said Lady Glencora. "I 've long felt that making presents means nothing. Only if one has a lot of money and people like it, why should n't one? I 've made so many to people I hardly ever saw, that one more to Lady Tewett can't hurt."

Perhaps the most wonderful affair in that campaign was the spirited attack which Mrs. Carbuncle made on a certain Mrs. Hanbury Smith, who for the last six or seven years had not been among Mrs. Carbuncle's more intimate friends. Mrs. Hanbury Smith lived with her husband in Paris, but before her marriage had known Mrs. Carbuncle in London. Her father, Mr. Bunbury Jones, had from certain causes chosen to show certain civilities to Mrs. Carbuncle just at the period of his daughter's marriage, and Mrs. Carbuncle, being perhaps at that moment well supplied with ready money, had presented a marriage present. From that

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to this present day Mrs. Carbuncle had seen nothing of Mrs. Hanbury Smith nor of Mr. Bunbury Jones, but she was not the woman to waste the return value of such a transaction. A present so given was seed sown in the earth — seed, indeed, that could not be expected to give back twenty-fold, or even ten-fold, but still seed from which a crop should be expected. So she wrote to Mrs. Hanbury Smith explaining that her darling niece Lucinda was about to be married to Sir Griffin Tewett, and that, as she had no child of her own, Lucinda was the same to her as a daughter. And then, lest there might be any want of comprehension, she expressed her own assurance that her friend would be glad to have an opportunity of reciprocating the feelings which had been evinced on the occasion of her own marriage. "It is no good mincing matters nowadays," Mrs. Carbuncle would have said, had any friend pointed out to her that she was taking strong measures in the exaction of toll. "People have come to understand that a spade is a spade, and £10 £10," she would have said. Had Mrs. Hanbury Smith not noticed the application, there might perhaps have been an end of it, but she was silly enough to send over from Paris a little trumpery bit of finery, bought in the Palais Royal for ten francs. Whereupon Mrs. Carbuncle wrote the following letter:

"My Dear Mrs. Hanbury Smith: Lucinda has received your little brooch, and is much obliged to you for thinking of her; but you must remember that when you were married I sent you a bracelet which cost £10. If I had a daughter of my own I should, of course, expect that she would reap the benefit of

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this on her marriage, and my niece is the same to me as a daughter. I think that this is quite understood now among people in society. Lucinda will be disappointed much if you do not send her what she thinks she has a right to expect. Of course you can deduct the brooch if you please.

"Yours, very sincerely,

"JANE CARBUNCLE."

Mr. Hanbury Smith was something of a wag, and caused his wife to write back as follows:

"DEAR MRS. CARBUNCLE: I quite acknowledge the reciprocity system, but don't think it extends to descendants, certainly not to nieces. I acknowledge, too, the present quoted at £10. I thought it had been £7 10s." — "The nasty, mean creature," said Mrs. Carbuncle, when showing the correspondence to Lizzie, "must have been to the tradesman to inquire! The price named was £10, but I got £2 10s. off for ready money." — "At your second marriage I will do what is needful; but I can assure you I have n't recognised nieces with any of my friends.

"Yours, very truly,

"CAROLINE HANBURY SMITH."

The correspondence was carried no further, for not even can a Mrs. Carbuncle exact payment of such a debt in any established court; but she inveighed bitterly against the meanness of Mrs. Smith, telling the story openly, and never feeling that she had told it against herself. In her set it was generally thought that she had done quite right.

She managed better with old Mr. Cabob, who had

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certainly received many of Mrs. Carbuncle's smiles, and who was very rich. Mr. Cabob did as he was desired, and sent a check — a check for £20; and added a message that he hoped Miss Roanoke would buy with it some little thing that she liked. Miss Roanoke, or her aunt for her, liked a thirty guinea ring, and bought it, having the bill for the balance sent up to Mr. Cabob. Mr. Cabob, who probably knew that he must pay well for his smiles, never said anything about it.

Lady Eustace went into all this work, absolutely liking it. She had felt nothing of anger even as regarded her own contribution, much as she had struggled to reduce the amount. People, she felt, ought to be sharp; and it was nice to look at pretty things, and to be cunning about them. She would have applied to the Duke of Omnium had she dared, and was very triumphant when she got the smelling-bottle from Lady Glencora. But Lucinda herself took no part whatever in all these things. Nothing that Mrs. Carbuncle could say would induce her to take any interest in them, or even in the trousseau, which, without reference to expense, was being supplied chiefly on the very indifferent credit of Sir Griffin. What Lucinda had to say about the matter was said solely to her aunt. Neither Lady Eustace, nor Lord George, nor even the maid who dressed her, heard any of her complaints. But complain she did, and that with terrible energy.

"What is the use of it, Aunt Jane? I shall never have a house to put them into."

"What nonsense, my dear! Why should n't you have a house as well as others?"

"And if I had, I should never care for them. I hate

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them. What does Lady Glencora Palliser or Lord Fawn care for me?" Even Lord Fawn had been put under requisition, and had sent a little box full of stationery.

"They are worth money, Lucinda; and when a girl marries she always gets them."

"Yes; and when they come from people who love her, and who pour them into her lap with kisses, because she has given herself to a man she loves, then it must be nice. Oh, if I were marrying a poor man, and a poor friend had given me a gridiron to help me to cook my husband's dinner, how I could have valued it!"

"I don't know that you like poor things and poor people better than anybody else," said Aunt Jane.

"I don't like anything or anybody," said Lucinda.

"You had better take the good things that come to you, then; and not grumble. How I have worked to get all this arranged for you, and now what thanks have I?"

"You 'll find you have worked for very little, Aunt Jane. I shall never marry the man yet." This, however, had been said so often that Aunt Jane thought nothing of the threat.

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CHAPTER LXVI.

THE ASPIRATIONS OF MR. EMILIUS.

It was acknowledged by Mrs. Carbuncle very freely that in the matter of tribute no one behaved better than Mr. Emilius, the fashionable, foreign, *ci-devant* Jew preacher, who still drew great congregations in the neighbourhood of Mrs. Carbuncle's house. Mrs. Carbuncle, no doubt, attended regularly at Mr. Emilius's church, and had taken a sitting for thirteen Sundays at something like ten shillings a Sunday. But she had not as yet paid the money, and Mr. Emilius was well aware that if his tickets were not paid for in advance, there would be considerable defalcations in his income. He was, as a rule, very particular as to such payments, and would not allow a name to be put on a sitting till the money had reached his pockets; but with Mrs. Carbuncle he had descended to no such commercial accuracy. Mrs. Carbuncle had seats for three — for one of which Lady Eustace paid her share in advance — in the midst of the very best pews in the most conspicuous part of the house, and hardly a word had been said to her about the money. And now there came to them from Mr. Emilius the prettiest little gold salver that ever was seen.

"I send Messrs. Clerico's docket," wrote Mr. Emilius, "as Miss Roanoke may like to know the quality of the metal."

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"Ah," said Mrs. Carbuncle, inspecting the little dish and putting two and two together; "he 's got it cheap, no doubt, at the place where they commissioned him to buy the plate and candlesticks for the church; but at £3 16s. 3d. the gold is worth nearly twenty pounds." Mr. Emilius no doubt had had his outing in the autumn through the instrumentality of Mrs. Carbuncle's kindness; but that was past and gone, and such lavish gratitude for a past favour could hardly be expected from Mr. Emilius. "I 'll be hanged if he is n't after Portray Castle," said Mrs. Carbuncle to herself.

Poor Emilius was after Portray Castle and had been after Portray Castle in a silent, not very confident, but yet not altogether hopeless manner ever since he had seen the glories of that place and learned something of truth as to the widow's income. Mrs. Carbuncle was led to her conclusion not simply by the wedding present, but in part also by the diligence displayed by Mr. Emilius in removing the doubts which had got abroad respecting his condition in life. He assured Mrs. Carbuncle that he had never been married. Shortly after his ordination, which had been effected under the hands of that great and good man the late Bishop of Jerusalem, he had taken to live with him a lady who was — Mrs. Carbuncle did not quite recollect who the lady was, but remembered that she was connected in some way with a step-mother of Mr. Emilius who lived in Bohemia. This lady had for a while kept house for Mr. Emilius; but ill-natured things had been said, and Mr. Emilius, having respect to his cloth, had sent the poor lady back to Bohemia. The consequence was that he now lived in a solitude which was absolute and, as Mr. Emilius added, somewhat melancholy. All this

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Mr. Emilius explained very fully, not to Lizzie herself, but to Mrs. Carbuncle. If Lady Eustace chose to entertain such a suitor, why should he not come? It was nothing to Mrs. Carbuncle.

Lizzie laughed when she was told that she might add the reverend gentleman to the list of her admirers.

"Don't you remember," she said, "how we used to chaff Miss Macnulty about him?"

"I knew better than that," replied Mrs. Carbuncle.

"There is no saying what a man may be after," said Lizzie. "I didn't know but what he might have thought that Macnulty's connection would increase his congregation."

"He's after you, my dear, and your income. He can manage a congregation for himself."

Lizzie was very civil to him, but it would be unjust to her to say that she gave him any encouragement. It is quite the proper thing for a lady to be on intimate, and even on affectionate terms with her favourite clergyman, and Lizzie certainly had intercourse with no clergyman who was a greater favourite with her than Mr. Emilius. She had a dean for an uncle, and a bishop for an uncle-in-law; but she was at no pains to hide her contempt for these old fogies of the church.

"They preach now and then in the cathedral," she said to Mr. Emilius, "and everybody takes the opportunity of going to sleep." Mr. Emilius was very much amused at this description of the eloquence of the dignitaries. It was quite natural to him that people should go to sleep in church who take no trouble in seeking eloquent preachers.

"Ah," he said, "the church in England, which is my church, the church which I love, is beautiful. She

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is as a maiden, all glorious with fine raiment. But, alas, she is mute. She does not sing. She has no melody. But the time cometh in which she shall sing. I, myself, I am a poor singer in the great choir." In saying which Mr. Emilius no doubt intended to allude to his eloquence as a preacher.

He was a man who could listen as well as sing, and he was very careful to hear well that which was being said in public about Lady Eustace and her diamonds. He had learned thoroughly what was her condition in reference to the Portray estate, and was rejoiced rather than otherwise to find that she enjoyed only a life-interest in the property. Had the thing been better than it was, it would have been the further removed from his reach. And in the same way, when rumours reached him prejudicial to Lizzie in respect of the diamonds, he perceived that such prejudice might work weal for him. A gentleman once, on ordering a mackerel that would come to a shilling, found he could have a stale mackerel for sixpence. "Then bring me a stale mackerel," said the gentleman. Mr. Emilius coveted fish, but was aware that his position did not justify him in expecting the best fish in the market. The Lord Fawns and the Frank Greystocks of the world would be less likely to covet Lizzie, should she by any little indiscretion have placed herself under a temporary cloud. Mr. Emilius had carefully observed the heavens, and knew how quickly such clouds will disperse themselves when they are tinged with gold. There was nothing which Lizzie had done, or would be likely to do, which could materially affect her income. It might indeed be possible that the Eustaces should make her pay for the necklace; but, even in that case

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there would be quite enough left for that modest, unambitious comfort which Mr. Emilius desired. It was by preaching, and not by wealth, that he must make himself known in the world! but for a preacher to have a pretty wife with a title and a good income, and a castle in Scotland, what an Elysium it would be! In such a condition he would envy no dean, no bishop, no archbishop! He thought a great deal about it, and saw no positive bar to his success.

She told him that she was going to Scotland.

"Not immediately!" he exclaimed.

"My little boy is there," she said.

"But why should not your little boy be here? Surely for people who can choose, the great centre of the world offers attractions which cannot be found in secluded spots."

"I love seclusion," said Lizzie with rapture.

"Ah, yes; I can believe that." Mr. Emilius had himself witnessed the seclusion of Portray Castle, and had heard, when there, many stories of the Ayrshire hunting. "It is your nature — but, dear Lady Eustace, will you allow me to say that our nature is implanted in us in accordance with the Fall?"

"Do you mean to say that it is wicked to like to be in Scotland better than in this giddy town?"

"I say nothing about wicked, Lady Eustace; but this I do say, that nature alone will not lead us always aright. It is good to be at Portray part of the year, no doubt; but are there not blessings in such a congregation of humanity as this London which you cannot find at Portray?"

"I can hear you preach, Mr. Emilius, certainly."

"I hope that is something, too, Lady Eustace; other-

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wise a great many people who kindly come to hear me must sadly waste their time. And your example to the world around; is it not more serviceable amidst the crowds of London than in the solitudes of Scotland? There is more good to be done, Lady Eustace, by living among our fellow creatures than by deserting them. Therefore I think you should not go to Scotland before August, but should have your little boy brought to you here."

"The air of his native mountains is everything to my child," said Lizzie. The child had in fact been born at Bobsborough, but that probably would make no real difference.

"You cannot wonder that I should plead for your stay," said Mr. Emilius, throwing all his soul into his eyes. "How dark would everything be to me if I missed you from your seat in the house of praise and prayer!"

Lizzie Eustace, like some other ladies who ought to be more appreciative, was altogether deficient in what may perhaps be called good taste in reference to men. Though she was clever, and though in spite of her ignorance she at once knew an intelligent man from a fool, she did not know the difference between a gentleman and a — "cad." It was in her estimation something against Mr. Emilius that he was a clergyman, something against him that he had nothing but what he earned, something against him that he was supposed to be a renegade Jew, and that nobody knew whence he came nor who he was. These deficiencies or drawbacks Lizzie recognised. But it was nothing against him in her judgment that he was a greasy, fawning, pawing, creeping, black-browed rascal, who could not look her full in the face,

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and whose every word sounded like a lie. There was a twang in his voice which ought to have told her that he was utterly untrustworthy. There was an oily pretence at earnestness in his manner which ought to have told that he was not fit to associate with gentlemen. There was a foulness of demeanour about him which ought to have given to her, as a woman at any rate brought up among ladies, an abhorrence of his society. But all this Lizzie did not feel. She ridiculed to Mrs. Carbuncle the idea of the preacher's courtship. She still thought that in the teeth of all her misfortunes she could do better with herself than marry Mr. Emilius. She conceived that the man must be impertinent if Mrs. Carbuncle's assertion were true; but she was neither angry nor disgusted, and she allowed him to talk to her, and even to make love to her, after his nasty pseudo-clerical fashion.

She could surely still do better with herself than marry Mr. Emilius! It was now the twentieth of March, and a fortnight had gone since an intimation had been sent to her from the headquarters of the police that Patience Crabstick was in their hands. Nothing further had occurred, and it might be that Patience Crabstick had told no tale against her. She could not bring herself to believe that Patience had no tale to tell, but it might be that Patience, though she was in the hands of the police, would find it to her interest to tell no tale against her late mistress. At any rate there was silence and quiet, and the affair of the diamonds seemed almost to be passing out of people's minds. Greystock had twice called in Scotland Yard, but had been able to learn nothing. It was feared, they said, that the people really engaged in the

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robbery had got away scot-free. Frank did not quite believe them, but he could learn nothing from them. Thus encouraged, Lizzie determined that she would remain in London till after Lucinda's marriage, till after she should have received the promised letter from Lord Fawn, as to which, though it was so long in coming, she did not doubt that it would come at last. She could do nothing with Frank, who was a fool! She could do nothing with Lord George, who was a brute! Lord Fawn would still be within her reach, if only the secret about the diamonds could be kept a secret till after she should have become his wife.

About this time Lucinda spoke to her respecting her proposed journey. "You were talking of going to Scotland a week ago, Lady Eustace."

"And am still talking of it."

"Aunt Jane says that you are waiting for my wedding. It is very kind of you, but pray don't do that."

"I should n't think of going now till after your marriage. It only wants ten or twelve days."

"I count them. I know how many days it wants. It may want more than that."

"You can't put it off now, I should think," said Lizzie; "and as I have ordered my dress for the occasion I shall certainly stay and wear it."

"I am very sorry for your dress. I am very sorry for it all. Do you know; I sometimes think I shall — murder him."

"Lucinda, how can you say anything so horrible! But I see you are only joking." There did come a ghastly smile over that beautiful face, which was so seldom lighted up by any expression of mirth or good humour. "But I wish you would not say such horrible things."

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"It would serve him right; and if he were to murder me that would serve me right. He knows that I detest him, and yet he goes on with it. I have told him so a score of times, but nothing will make him give it up. It is not that he loves me, but he thinks that that will be his triumph."

"Why don't you give it up if it makes you unhappy?"

"It ought to come from him, ought it not?"

"I don't see why," said Lizzie.

"He is not bound to anybody as I am bound to my aunt. No one can have exacted an oath from him. Lady Eustace, you don't quite understand how we are situated. I wonder whether you would take the trouble to be good to me?"

Lucinda Roanoke had never asked a favour of her before; had never, to Lizzie's knowledge, asked a favour of any one. "In what way can I be good to you?" she said.

"Make him give it up. You may tell him what you like of me. Tell him that I shall only make him miserable, and more despicable than he is; that I shall never be a good wife to him. Tell him that I am thoroughly bad, and that he will repent it to the last day of his life. Say whatever you like, but make him give it up."

"When everything has been prepared!"

"What does all that signify compared to a life of misery? Lady Eustace, I really think that I should — kill him, if he were — were my husband." Lizzie at last said that she would at any rate speak to Sir Griffin.

And she did speak to Sir Griffin, having waited three or four days to do so. There had been some desper-

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ately sharp words between Sir Griffin and Mrs. Carbuncle with reference to money. Sir Griffin had been given to understand that Lucinda had, or would have, some few hundred pounds, and insisted that the money should be handed over to him on the day of his marriage. Mrs. Carbuncle had declared that the money was to come from property to be realised in New York, and had named a day which had seemed to Sir Griffin to be as the Greek Kalends. He expressed an opinion that he was swindled, and Mrs. Carbuncle, unable to restrain herself, had turned upon him full of wrath. He was caught by Lizzie as he was descending the stairs, and in the dining-room he poured out the tale of his wrongs. "That woman does n't know what fair dealing means," said he.

"That 's a little hard, Sir Griffin, is n't it?" said Lizzie.

"Not a bit. A trumpery six hundred pounds! And she has n't a shilling of fortune, and never will have, beyond that! No fellow ever was more generous or more foolish than I have been." Lizzie, as she heard this, could not refrain from thinking of the poor departed Sir Florian. "I did n't look for fortune, or say a word about money, as almost every man does, but just took her as she was. And now she tells me that I can't have just the bit of money that I wanted for our tour. It would serve them both right if I were to give it up."

"Why don't you?" said Lizzie. He looked quickly, sharply, and closely into her face as she asked the question. "I would, if I thought as you do."

"And lay myself in for all manner of damages," said Sir Griffin.

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"There would n't be anything of that kind, I 'm sure. You see the truth is, you and Miss Roanoke are always having — having little tiffs together. I sometimes think you don't really care a bit for her."

"It 's the old woman I 'm complaining of," said Sir Griffin, "and I 'm not going to marry her. I shall have seen the last of her when I get out of the church, Lady Eustace."

"Do you think she wishes it?"

"Who do you mean?" asked Sir Griffin.

"Why — Lucinda?"

"Of course she does. Where 'd she be now if it was n't to go on? I don't believe they 've money enough between them to pay the rent of the house they 're living in."

"Of course I don't want to make difficulties, Sir Griffin, and no doubt the affair has gone very far now. But I really think Lucinda would consent to break it off if you wish it. I have never thought that you were really in love with her."

He again looked at her very sharply and very closely.

"Has she sent you to say all this?"

"Has who sent me? Mrs. Carbuncle did n't."

"But Lucinda?"

She paused a moment before she replied, but she could not bring herself to be absolutely honest in the matter. "No; she did n't send me. But from what I see and hear, I am quite sure she does not wish to go on with it."

"Then she shall go on with it," said Sir Griffin. "I 'm not going to be made a fool of in that way. She shall go on with it, and the first thing I mean to tell her as my wife is, that she shall never see that

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woman again. If she thinks she's going to be master, she's very much mistaken." Sir Griffin, as he said this, showed his teeth, and declared his purpose to be masterful by his features as well as by his words; but Lady Eustace was nevertheless of opinion that when the two came to an absolute struggle for mastery, the lady would get the better of it.

Lizzie never told Miss Roanoke of her want of success, or even of the effort she had made; nor did the unhappy young woman come to her for any reply. The preparations went on, and it was quite understood that on this peculiar occasion Mrs. Carbuncle intended to treat her friends with profuse hospitality. She proposed to give a breakfast; and as the house in Hertford street was very small, rooms had been taken at a hotel in Albemarle street. Thither as the day of the marriage drew near, all the presents were taken — so that they might be viewed by the guests, with the names of the donors attached to them. As some of the money given had been very much wanted indeed, so that the actual checks could not conveniently be spared just at the moment to pay for the presents which ought to have been bought, a few very pretty things were hired, as to which, when the donors should see their names attached to them, they should surely think that the money given had been laid out to great advantage.

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CHAPTER LXVII.

THE EYE OF THE PUBLIC.

It took Lord Fawn a long time to write his letter, but at last he wrote it. The delay must not be taken as throwing any slur on his character as a correspondent or a man of business, for many irritating causes sprang up sufficient to justify him in pleading that it arose from circumstances beyond his own control. It is moreover felt by us all that the time which may fairly be taken in the performance of any task depends, not on the amount of work, but on the importance of it when done. A man is not expected to write a check for a couple of thousand pounds as readily as he would one for five, unless he be a man to whom a couple of thousand pounds is a mere nothing. To Lord Fawn the writing of this letter was everything. He had told Lizzie, with much exactness, what he would put into it. He would again offer his hand — acknowledging himself bound to do so by his former offer — but would give reasons why she should not accept it. If anything should occur in the mean time which would in his opinion justify him in again repudiating her, he would of course take advantage of such circumstance. If asked himself what was his prevailing motive in all that he did or intended to do, he would have declared that it was above all things necessary that he should "put himself right in the eye of the British public."

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But he was not able to do this without interference from the judgment of others. Both Mr. and Mrs. Hittaway interfered; and he could not prevent himself from listening to them and believing them, though he would contradict all they said, and snub all their theories. Frank Greystock also continued to interfere, and Lady Glencora Palliser. Even John Eustace had been worked upon to write to Lord Fawn, stating his opinion as trustee for his late brother's property, that the Eustace family did not think that there was ground of complaint against Lady Eustace in reference to the diamonds which had been stolen. This was a terrible blow to Lord Fawn, and had come no doubt from a general agreement among the Eustace faction — including the bishop, John Eustace, and even Mr. Camperdown — that it would be a good thing to get the widow married and placed under some decent control.

Lady Glencora absolutely had the effrontery to ask him whether the marriage was not going to take place, and when a day would be fixed. He gathered up his courage to give her ladyship a rebuke. "My private affairs do seem to be uncommonly interesting," he said.

"Why, yes, Lord Fawn," said Lady Glencora, whom nothing could abash, "most interesting. You see dear Lady Eustace is so very popular that we all want to know what is to be her fate."

"I regret to say that I cannot answer your ladyship's question with any precision," said Lord Fawn.

But the Hittaway persecution was by far the worst. "You have seen her, Frederic," said his sister.

"Yes, I have."

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"You have made her no promise?"

"My dear Clara, this is a matter in which I must use my own judgment."

"But the family, Frederic?"

"I do not think that any member of our family has a just right to complain of my conduct since I have had the honour of being its head. I have endeavoured so to live that my actions should encounter no private or public censure. If I fail to meet with your approbation, I shall grieve; but I cannot on that account act otherwise than in accordance with my own judgment."

Mrs. Hittaway knew her brother well, and was not afraid of him. "That's all very well; and I am sure you know, Frederic, how proud we all are of you. But this woman is a nasty, low, scheming, ill-conducted, dishonest little wretch; and if you make her your wife you'll be miserable all your life. Nothing would make me and Orlando so unhappy as to quarrel with you. But we know that it is so, and to the last minute I shall say so. Why don't you ask her to her face about that man down in Scotland?"

"My dear Clara, perhaps I know what to ask her and what not to ask her better than you can tell me."

And his brother-in-law was quite as bad. "Fawn," he said, "in this matter of Lady Eustace, don't you think you ought to put your conduct into the hands of some friend?"

"What do you mean by that?"

"I think it is an affair in which a man would have so much comfort in being able to say that he was guided by advice. Of course her people want you to

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marry her. Now if you could just tell them that the whole thing was in the hands of — say me, or any other friend, you would be relieved, you know, of so much responsibility. They might hammer away at me ever so long and I should n't care twopence."

"If there is to be any hammering, it cannot be borne vicariously," said Lord Fawn, and as he said it he was quite pleased by his own sharpness and wit.

He had indeed put himself beyond protection by vicarious endurance of hammering when he promised to write to Lady Eustace, explaining his own conduct and giving reasons. Had anything turned up in Scotland Yard which would have justified him in saying, or even in thinking, that Lizzie had stolen her own diamonds, he would have sent word to her that he must abstain from any communication till that matter had been cleared up; but since the appearance of that mysterious paragraph in the newspapers nothing had been heard of the robbery, and public opinion certainly seemed to be in favour of Lizzie's innocence. He did think that the Eustace faction was betraying him, as he could not but remember how eager Mr. Camperdown had been in asserting that the widow was keeping an enormous amount of property and claiming it as her own, whereas in truth she had not the slightest title to it. It was, in a great measure, in consequence of the assertions of the Eustace faction, almost in obedience to their advice, that he had resolved to break off the match; and now they turned upon him, and John Eustace absolutely went out of his way to write him a letter which was clearly meant to imply that he, Lord Fawn, was bound to marry the

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woman to whom he had once engaged himself! Lord Fawn felt that he was ill-used, and that a man might have to undergo a great deal of bad treatment who should strive to put himself right in the eye of the public.

At last he wrote his letter — on a Wednesday, which with him had something of the comfort of a half-holiday, as on that day he was not required to attend Parliament.

"INDIA OFFICE, March 28, 18—.

"MY DEAR LADY EUSTACE: In accordance with the promise which I made to you when I did myself the honour of waiting upon you in Hertford street, I take up my pen with the view of communicating to you the result of my deliberations respecting the engagement of marriage which no doubt did exist between us last summer.

"Since that time I have no doubt taken upon myself to say that that engagement was over; and I am free to admit that I did so without any assent or agreement on your part to that effect. Such conduct no doubt requires a valid and strong defence. My defence is as follows:

"I learned that you were in possession of a large amount of property, vested in diamonds, which was claimed by the executors under your late husband's will as belonging to his estate; and as to which they declared, in the most positive manner, that you had no right or title to it whatever. I consulted friends and I consulted lawyers, and I was led to the conviction that this property certainly did not belong to you. Had I married you in these circumstances, I could not but have become a participator in the lawsuit which I

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was assured would be commenced. I could not be a participator with you, because I believed you to be in the wrong. And I certainly could not participate with those who would in such case be attacking my own wife.

"In this condition of things I requested you — as you must I think yourself own, with all deference and good feeling — to give up the actual possession of the property, and to place the diamonds in neutral hands" — Lord Fawn was often called upon to be neutral in reference to the condition of outlying Indian principalities — "till the law should have decided as to their ownership. As regards myself, I neither coveted nor rejected the possession of that wealth for my future wife. I desired simply to be free from an embarrassment which would have overwhelmed me. You declined my request — not only positively, but perhaps I may add peremptorily; and then I was bound to adhere to the decision I had communicated to you.

"Since that time the property has been stolen and, as I believe, dissipated. The lawsuit against you has been withdrawn; and the bone of contention, so to say, is no longer existing. I am no longer justified in declining to keep my engagement because of the prejudice to which I should have been subjected by your possession of the diamonds; and therefore, as far as that goes, I withdraw my withdrawal." This Lord Fawn thought was rather a happy phrase, and he read it aloud to himself more than once.

"But now there arises the question whether, in both our interests, this marriage should go on, or whether it may not be more conducive to your happiness and to mine that it should be annulled for causes altogether irrespective of the diamonds. In a matter so serious as

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marriage, the happiness of the two parties is that which requires graver thought than any other consideration.

"There has no doubt sprung up between us a feeling of mutual distrust, which has led to recrimination, and which is hardly compatible with that perfect confidence which should exist between a man and his wife. This first arose no doubt from the different views which we took as to that property of which I have spoken, and as to which your judgment may possibly have been better than mine. On that head I will add nothing to what I have already said; but the feeling has arisen, and I fear it cannot be so perfectly allayed as to admit of that reciprocal trust without which we could not live happily together. I confess that for my own part I do not now desire a union which was once the great object of my ambition, and that I could not go to the altar with you without fear and trembling. As to your own feelings, you best know what they are. I bring no charge against you; but if you have ceased to love me I think you should cease to wish to be my wife, and that you should not insist upon a marriage simply because by doing so you would triumph over a former objection." Before he finished this paragraph he thought much of Andy Gowran and of the scene among the rocks of which he had heard. But he could not speak of it. He had found himself unable to examine the witness who had been brought to him, and had honestly told himself that he could not take that charge as proved. Andy Gowran might have lied. In his heart he believed that Andy Gowran had lied. The matter was distasteful to him, and he would not touch it. And yet he knew that the woman did not love him, and he longed to tell her so.

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"As to what we might each gain or each lose in a worldly point of view, either by marrying or not marrying, I will not say a word. You have rank and wealth, and therefore I can comfort myself by thinking that if I dissuade you from this marriage I shall rob you of neither. I acknowledge that I wish to dissuade you, as I believe that we should not make each other happy. As however I do consider that I am bound to keep my engagement to you if you demand that I shall do so, I leave the matter in your hands for decision. I am, and shall remain, your sincere friend,

"FAWN."

He read the letter and copied it, and gave himself great credit for the composition. He thought that it was impossible that any woman after reading it should express a wish to become the wife of the man who wrote it; and yet — so he believed, no man or woman could find fault with him for writing it. There certainly was one view of the case which was very distressing. How would it be with him if after all she should say that she would marry him? After having given her her choice — having put it all in writing — he could not again go back from it. He would be in her power, and of what use would his life be to him? Would Parliament or the India Office or the eye of the public be able to comfort him then in the midst of his many miseries? What could he do with a wife whom he married with a declaration that he disliked her? With such feelings as were his, how could he stand before a clergyman and take an oath that he would love her and cherish her? Would she not ever be as an adder to him — as an adder whom it would be im-

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possible that he should admit into his bosom? Could he live in the same house with her; and if so, could he ask his mother and sisters to visit her? He remembered well what Mrs. Hittaway had called her — a nasty, low, scheming, ill-conducted, dishonest little wretch! And he believed that she was so! Yet he was once again offering to marry her, should she choose to accept him.

Nevertheless, the letter was sent. There was, in truth, no alternative. He had promised that he would write such a letter, and all that had remained to him was the power of cramming into it every available argument against the marriage. This he had done and, as he thought, had done well. It was impossible that she should desire to marry him after reading such a letter as that!

Lizzie received it in her bedroom, where she breakfasted, and told of its arrival to her friend Mrs. Carbuncle as soon as they met each other. "My lord has come down from his high horse at last," she said, with the letter in her hand.

"What — Lord Fawn?"

"Yes; Lord Fawn. What other lord? There is no other lord for me. He is my lord, my peer of Parliament, my Cabinet minister, my right honourable, my member of the Government — my young man too, as the maid-servants call them."

"What does he say?"

"Say — what should he say — just that he has behaved very badly, and that he hopes I shall forgive him."

"Not quite that; does he?"

"That 's what it all means. Of course there is

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ever so much of it — pages of it. It would n't be Lord Fawn if he did n't spin it all out, like an act of Parliament, with whereas and whereis and whereof. It is full of all that; but the meaning of it is that he 's at my feet again, and that I may pick him up if I choose to take him. I 'd show you the letter, only perhaps it would n't be fair to the poor man."

"What excuse does he make?"

"Oh — as to that he 's rational enough. He calls the necklace the — bone of contention. That 's rather good for Lord Fawn; is n't it? The bone of contention, he says, has been removed; and therefore there is no reason why we should n't marry if we like it. He shall hear enough about the bone of contention if we do 'marry.'"

"And what shall you do now?"

"Ah yes; that 's easily asked; is it not? The man 's a good sort of man in his way, you know. He does n't drink or gamble; and I don't think there is a bit of the King David about him — that I don't."

"Virtue personified, I should say."

"And he is n't extravagant."

"Then why not have him and done with it?" asked Mrs. Carbuncle.

"He is such a lumpy man," said Lizzie; "such an ass; such a load of government waste paper."

"Come, my dear; you 've had troubles."

"I have indeed," said Lizzie.

"And there 's no quite knowing yet how far they 're over."

"What do you mean by that, Mrs. Carbuncle?"

"Nothing very much; but still, you see, they may come again. As to Lord George, we all know that he

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has not got a penny-piece in the world that he can call his own."

"If he had as many pennies as Judas, Lord George would be nothing to me," said Lizzie.

"And your cousin really does n't seem to mean anything."

"I know very well what my cousin means. He and I understand each other thoroughly; but cousins can love one another very well without marrying."

"Of course you know your own business, but if I were you I would take Lord Fawn. I speak in true kindness, as one woman to another. After all, what does love signify? How much real love do we ever see among married people? Does Lady Glencora Palliser really love her husband, who thinks of nothing in the world but putting taxes on and off?"

"Do you love your husband, Mrs. Carbuncle?"

"No; but that is a different kind of thing. Circumstances have caused me to live apart from him. The man is a good man, and there is no reason why you should not respect him and treat him well. He will give you a fixed position, which really you want badly, Lady Eustace."

"Torriloo, tooriloo, tooriloo, looriloo," said Lizzie, in contemptuous disdain of her friend's caution.

"And then all this trouble about the diamonds and the robberies will be over," continued Mrs. Carbuncle. Lizzie looked at her very intently. What should make Mrs. Carbuncle suppose that there need be, or indeed could be, any further trouble about the diamonds?

"So, that 's your advice," said Lizzie, "I 'm half inclined to take it, and perhaps I shall. However, I have brought him round, and that 's something, my dear.

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And either one way or the other, I shall let him know that I like my triumph. I was determined to have it, and I 've got it."

Then she read the letter again very seriously. Could she possibly marry a man who in so many words told her that he did n't want her? Well, she thought she could. Was not everybody treating everybody else much in the same way? Had she not loved her Corsair truly, and how had he treated her? Had she not been true, disinterested, and most affectionate to Frank Greystock; and what had she got from him? To manage her business wisely, and put herself upon firm ground, that was her duty at present. Mrs. Carbuncle was right there. The very name of Lady Fawn would be a rock to her, and she wanted a rock. She thought upon the whole that she could marry him — unless Patience Crabstick and the police should again interfere with her prosperity.

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CHAPTER LXVIII.

THE MAJOR.

LADY EUSTACE did not intend to take as much time in answering Lord Fawn's letter as he had taken in writing it; but even she found that the subject was one which demanded a good deal of thought. Mrs. Carbuncle had very freely recommended her to take the man, supporting her advice by arguments which Lizzie felt to be valid; but then Mrs. Carbuncle did not know all the circumstances. Mrs. Carbuncle had not actually seen his lordship's letter; and though the great part of the letter, the formal repetition, namely, of the writer's offer of marriage, had been truly told to her, still, as the reader will have perceived, she had been kept in the dark as to some of the details. Lizzie did sit at her desk with the object of putting a few words together in order that she might see how they looked, and she found that there was a difficulty.

"MY DEAR LORD FAWN: As we have been engaged to marry each other, and as all our friends have been told, I think that the thing had better go on."

That, after various attempts, was, she thought, the best letter that she could send — if she should make up her mind to be Lady Fawn. But, on the morning of the 30th of March she had not sent her letter. She had told herself that she would take two days to think

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of her reply, and on the Friday morning the few words she had prepared were still lying in her desk.

What was she to get by marrying a man she absolutely disliked? That he also absolutely disliked her was not a matter much in her thoughts. The man would not ill-treat her because he disliked her; or, it might perhaps be juster to say, that the ill-treatment which she might fairly anticipate would not be of a nature which would much affect her comfort grievously. He would not beat her, nor rob her, nor lock her up, nor starve her. He would either neglect her or preach sermons to her. For the first she could console herself by the attention of others; and should he preach, perhaps she could preach too — as sharply if not as lengthily as his lordship. At any rate she was not afraid of him. But what would she gain? It is very well to have a rock, as Mrs. Carbuncle had said, but a rock is not everything. She did not know whether she cared much for living upon a rock. Even stability may be purchased at too high a price. There was not a grain of poetry in the whole composition of Lord Fawn, and poetry was what her very soul craved — poetry, together with houses, champagne, jewels, and admiration. Her income was still her own, and she did not quite see that the rock was so absolutely necessary to her. Then she wrote another note to Lord Fawn, a specimen of a note, so that she might have the opportunity of comparing the two. This note took her much longer than the one first written.

"My Lord: I do not know how to acknowledge with sufficient humility the condescension and great kindness of your lordship's letter. But perhaps its

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manly generosity is more conspicuous than either. The truth is, my lord, you want to escape from your engagement, but are too much afraid of the consequences to dare to do so by any act of your own. Therefore you throw it upon me. You are quite successful. I don't think you ever read poetry, but perhaps you may understand the two following lines:

"'I am constrained to say your lordship's scullion
Should sooner be my husband than yourself.'

"I see through you, and despise you thoroughly.

"E. EUSTACE."

She was comparing the two answers together, very much in doubt as to which should be sent, when there came a message to her by a man whom she knew to be a policeman, though he did not announce himself as such, and was dressed in plain clothes. Major Mackintosh sent his compliments to her, and would wait upon her that afternoon at three o 'clock, if she would have the kindness to receive him. At the first moment of seeing the man she felt that after all the rock was what she wanted. Mrs. Carbuncle was right. She had had troubles and might have more, and the rock was the thing. But then the more certainly did she become convinced of this by the presence of the major' s messenger, the more clearly did she see the difficulty of attaining the security which the rock offered. If this public exposure should fall upon her, Lord Fawn's renewed offer, as she knew well, would stand for nothing. If once it were known that she had kept the necklace — her own necklace — under her pillow at Carlisle, he would want no further justification in repudiating her, were it for the tenth time.

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She was very uncivil to the messenger, and the more so because she found that the man bore her rudeness without turning upon her and rending her. When she declared that the police had behaved very badly, and that Major Mackintosh was inexcusable in troubling her again, and that she had ceased to care twopence about the necklace, the man made no remonstrance to her petulance. He owned that the trouble was very great, and the police very inefficient. He almost owned that the major was inexcusable. He did not care what he owned so that he achieved his object. But when Lizzie said that she could not see Major Mackintosh at three, and objected equally to two, four, or five; then the courteous messenger from Scotland Yard did say a word to make her understand that there must be a meeting — and he hinted also that the major was doing a most unusually good-natured thing in coming to Hertford street. Of course Lizzie made the appointment. If the major chose to come, she would be at home at three.

As soon as the policeman was gone she sat alone, with a manner very much changed from that which she had worn since the arrival of Lord Fawn's letter; with a fresh weight of care upon her, greater perhaps than she had ever hitherto borne. She had had bad moments — when, for instance, she had been taken before the magistrates at Carlisle, when she found the police in her house on her return from the theatre, and when Lord George had forced her secret from her. But at each of these periods hope had come renewed before despair had crushed her. Now it seemed to her that the thing was done and that the game was over. This chief man of the London police no doubt

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knew the whole story. If she could only already have climbed upon some rock, so that there might be a man bound to defend her — a man at any rate bound to put himself forward on her behalf and do whatever might be done in her defence, she might have endured it!

What would she do now, at this minute? She looked at her watch and found that it was already past one. Mrs. Carbuncle, as she knew, was closeted up-stairs with Lucinda, whose wedding was fixed for the following Monday. It was now Friday. Were she to call upon Mrs. Carbuncle for aid no aid would be forthcoming unless she were to tell the whole truth. She almost thought that she would do so. But then, how great would have been her indiscretion if, after all, when the major should come, she should discover that he did not know the truth himself! That Mrs. Carbuncle would keep her secret she did not for a moment think. She longed for the comfort of some friend's counsel, but she found at last that she could not purchase it by telling everything to a woman.

Might it not be possible that she should still run away? She did not know much of the law, but she thought that they could not punish her for breaking an appointment even with a man so high in authority as Major Mackintosh. She could leave a note saying that pressing business called her out. But whither should she go? She thought of taking a cab to the House of Commons, finding her cousin, and telling him everything. It would be so much better that he should see the major. But then again it might be that she should be mistaken as to the amount of the major's information. After a while she almost determined to fly off at once to Scotland, leaving word that she was

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obliged to go instantly to her child. But there was no direct train to Scotland before eight or nine in the evening, and during the intervening hours the police would have ample time to find her. What, indeed, could she do with herself during these intervening hours? Ah, if she had but a rock now, so that she need not be dependent altogether on the exercise of her own intellect!

Gradually the minutes passed by, and she became aware that she must face the major. Well! What had she done? She had stolen nothing. She had taken no person's property. She had, indeed, been wickedly robbed, and the police had done nothing to get back for her her property, as they were bound to have done. She would take care to tell the major what she thought about the negligence of the police. The major should not have the talk all to himself.

If it had not been for one word with which Lord George had stunned her ears, she could still have borne it well. She had told a lie; perhaps two or three lies. She knew that she had lied. But then people lie every day. She would not have minded it much if she were simply to be called a liar. But he had told her that she would be accused of perjury. There was something frightful to her in the name. And there were she knew not what dreadful penalties attached to it. Lord George had told her that she might be put in prison — whether he had said for years or for months she had forgotten. And she thought she had heard of people's property being confiscated to the Crown when they had been made out to be guilty of certain great offences. Oh, how she wished that she had a rock!

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When three o'clock came she had not started for Scotland or elsewhere, and at last she received the major. Could she have thoroughly trusted the servant she would have denied herself at the last moment, but she feared that she might be betrayed, and she thought that her position would be rendered even worse than it was at present by a futile attempt. She was sitting alone, pale, haggard, trembling, when Major Mackintosh was shown into her room. It may be as well explained at once, at this moment; the major knew, or thought that he knew, every circumstance of the two robberies, and that his surmises were, in every respect, right. Miss Crabstick and Mr. Cann were in comfortable quarters, and were prepared to tell all that they could tell. Mr. Smiler was in durance, and Mr. Benjamin was at Vienna, in the hands of the Austrian police, who were prepared to give him up to those who desired his society in England, on the completion of certain legal formalities. That Mr. Benjamin and Mr. Smiler would be prosecuted, the latter for the robbery and the former for conspiracy to rob, and for receiving stolen goods, was a matter of course. But what was to be done with Lady Eustace? That, at the present moment, was the prevailing trouble with the police. During the last three weeks every precaution had been taken to keep the matter secret, and it is hardly too much to say that Lizzie's interests were handled not only with consideration but with tenderness.

"Lady Eustace," said the major, "I am very sorry to trouble you. No doubt the man who called on you this morning explained to you who I am."

"Oh yes, I know who you are — quite well." Lizzie

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made a great effort to speak without betraying her consternation; but she was nearly prostrated. The major, however, hardly observed her, and was by no means at ease himself in his effort to save her from unnecessary annoyance. He was a tall, thin, gaunt man of about forty, with large, good-natured eyes — but it was not till the interview was half over that Lizzie took courage to look even into his face.

"Just so; I am come, you know, about the robbery which took place here — and the other robbery at Carlisle."

"I have been so troubled about these horrid robberies! Sometimes I think they 'll be the death of me."

"I think, Lady Eustace, we have found out the whole truth."

"Oh, I daresay. I wonder why — you have been so long — finding it out."

"We have had very clever people to deal with, Lady Eustace — and I fear that, even now, we shall never get back the property."

"I do not care about the property, sir — although it was all my own. Nobody has lost anything but myself; and I really don't see why the thing should not die out, as I don't care about it. Whoever it is, they may have it now."

"We were bound to get to the bottom of it all, if we could; and I think that we have — at last. Perhaps, as you say, we ought to have done it sooner."

"Oh — I don't care."

"We have two persons in custody, Lady Eustace, whom we shall use as witnesses, and I am afraid we shall have to call upon you also — as a witness." It

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occurred to Lizzie that they could not lock her up in prison and make her a witness too, but she said nothing. Then the major continued his speech — and asked her the question which was, in fact, alone material. "Of course, Lady Eustace, you are not bound to say anything to me unless you like — and you must understand that I by no means wish you to criminate yourself."

"I don't know what that means."

"If you yourself have done anything wrong, I don't want to ask you to confess it."

"I have had all my diamonds stolen, if you mean that. Perhaps it was wrong to have diamonds."

"But to come to my question — I suppose we may take it for granted that the diamonds were in your desk when the thieves made their entrance into this house, and broke the desk open, and stole the money out of it?" Lizzie breathed so hardly, that she was quite unable to speak. The man's voice was very gentle and very kind — but then how could she admit that one fact? All depended on that one fact. "The woman Crabstick," said the major, "has confessed, and will state on her oath that she saw the necklace in your hands in Hertford street, and that she saw it placed in the desk. She then gave information of this to Benjamin — as she had before given information as to your journey up from Scotland — and she was introduced to the two men whom she let into the house. One of them, indeed, who will also give evidence for us, she had before met at Carlisle. She then was present when the necklace was taken out of the desk. The man who opened the desk and took it out, who also cut the door at Carlisle, will give evidence to the

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same effect. The man who carried the necklace out of the house, and who broke open the box at Carlisle, will be tried — as will also Benjamin, who disposed of the diamonds. I have told you the whole story, as it has been told to me by the woman Crabstick. Of course you will deny the truth of it, if it be untrue." Lizzie sat with her eyes fixed upon the floor, but said nothing. She could not speak. "If you will allow me, Lady Eustace, to give you advice — really friendly advice ——"

"Oh, pray do."

"You had better admit the truth of the story, if it is true."

"They were my own," she whispered.

"Or, at any rate, you believed that they were. There can be no doubt, I think, as to that. No one supposes that the robbery at Carlisle was arranged on your behalf."

"Oh, no."

"But you had taken them out of the box before you went to bed at the inn?"

"Not then."

"But you had taken them?"

"I did it in the morning before I started from Scotland. They frightened me by saying the box would be stolen."

"Exactly — and then you put them into your desk here, in this house?"

"Yes — sir."

"I should tell you, Lady Eustace, that I had not a doubt about this before I came here. For some time past I have thought that it must be so; and latterly the confession of two of the accomplices has made

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it certain to me. One of the housebreakers and the jeweller will be tried for the felony, and I am afraid that you must undergo the annoyance of being one of the witnesses."

"What will they do to me, Major Mackintosh?" Lizzie now for the first time looked up into his eyes, and felt that they were kind. Could he be her rock? He did not speak to her like an enemy — and then, too, he would know better than any man alive how she might best escape from her trouble.

"They will ask you to tell the truth."

"Indeed I will do that," said Lizzie — not aware that, after so many lies, it might be difficult to tell the truth.

"And you will probably be asked to repeat it, this way and that, in a manner that will be troublesome to you. You see that here in London, and at Carlisle, you have — given incorrect versions."

"I know I have. But the necklace was my own. There was nothing dishonest — was there, Major Mackintosh? When they came to me at Carlisle I was so confused that I hardly knew what to tell them. And when I had once — given an incorrect version, you know, I did n't know how to go back."

The major was not so well acquainted with Lizzie as is the reader, and he pitied her. "I can understand all that," he said.

How much kinder he was than Lord George had been when she confessed the truth to him. Here would be a rock! And such a handsome man as he was, too — not exactly a Corsair, as he was great in authority over the London police — but a powerful, fine fellow, who would know what to do with

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swords and pistols as well as any Corsair — and one, too, no doubt, who would understand poetry! Any such dream, however, was altogether unavailing, as the major had a wife at home and seven children. "If you will only tell me what to do, I will do it," she said, looking up into his face with entreaty, and pressing her hands together in supplication.

Then at great length, and with much patience, he explained to her what he would have her do. He thought that, if she were summoned and used as a witness, there would be no attempt to prosecute her for the — incorrect versions — of which she had undoubtedly been guilty. The probability was, that she would receive assurance to this effect before she would be asked to give her evidence, preparatory to the committal of Benjamin and Smiler. He could not assure her that it would be so, but he had no doubt of it. In order, however, that things might be made to run as smooth as possible, he recommended her very strongly to go at once to Mr. Camperdown and make a clean breast of it to him. "The whole family should be told," said the major, "and it will be better for you that they should know it from yourself than from us." When she hesitated, he explained to her that the matter could no longer be kept as a secret, and that her evidence would certainly appear in the papers. He proposed that she should be summoned for that day week — which would be the Friday after Lucinda's marriage, and he suggested that she should go to Mr. Camperdown's on the morrow.

"What — to-morrow?" exclaimed Lizzie, in dismay.

"My dear Lady Eustace," said the major, "the

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sooner you get back into straight running, the sooner you will be comfortable." Then she promised that she would go on the Tuesday — the day after the marriage. "If he learns it in the mean time, you must not be surprised," said the major.

"Tell me one thing, Major Mackintosh," she said, as she gave him her hand at parting, "they can't take away from me anything that is my own — can they?"

"I don't think they can," said the major, escaping rather quickly from the room.

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CHAPTER LXIX.

"I CANNOT DO IT."

THE Saturday and the Sunday Lizzie passed in outward tranquillity, though doubtless her mind was greatly disturbed. She said nothing of what had passed between her and Major Mackintosh, explaining that his visit had been made solely with the object of informing her that Mr. Benjamin was to be sent home from Vienna, but that the diamonds were gone forever. She had, as she declared to herself, agreed with Major Mackintosh that she would not go to Mr. Camperdown till the Tuesday — justifying her delay by her solicitude in reference to Miss Roanoke's marriage; and therefore these two days were her own. After them would come a totally altered phase of existence. All the world would know the history of the diamonds — cousin Frank, and Lord Fawn, and John Eustace, and Mrs. Carbuncle, and the Bobsborough people, and Lady Glencora, and that old vulturess, her aunt, the Countess of Linlithgow. It must come now — but she had two days in which she could be quiet and think of her position. She would, she thought, send one of her letters to Lord Fawn before she went to Mr. Camperdown — but which should she send? Or should she write a third explaining the whole matter in sweetly piteous feminine terms, and

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swearing that the only remaining feeling in her bosom was a devoted affection to the man who had now twice promised to be her husband?

In the mean time the preparations for the great marriage went on. Mrs. Carbuncle spent her time busily between Lucinda's bedchamber and the banqueting hall in Albemarle street. In spite of pecuniary difficulties the trousseau was to be a wonder; and even Lizzie was astonished at the jewelry which that indefatigable woman had collected together for a preliminary show in Hertford street. She had spent hours at Howell and James's, and had made marvellous bargains there and elsewhere. Things were sent for selection, of which the greater portion were to be returned, but all were kept for the show. The same things which were shown to separate friends in Hertford street as part of the trousseau on Friday and Saturday, were carried over to Albemarle street on the Sunday, so as to add to the quasi-public exhibition of presents on the Monday. The money expended had gone very far. The most had been made of a failing credit. Every particle of friendly generosity had been so manipulated as to add to the external magnificence. And Mrs. Carbuncle had done all this without any help from Lucinda, in the midst of most contemptuous indifference on Lucinda's part. She could hardly be got to allow the milliners to fit the dresses to her body, and positively refused to thrust her feet into certain golden-heeled boots with brightly-bronzed toes, which were a great feature among the raiment. Nobody knew it except Mrs. Carbuncle and the maid; even Lizzie Eustace did not know it; but once the bride absolutely

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ran amuck among the finery, scattering the laces here and there, pitching the glove-boxes under the bed, chucking the golden-heeled boots into the fire-place, and exhibiting quite a tempest of fury against one of the finest shows of petticoats ever arranged with a view to the admiration and envy of female friends. But all this Mrs. Carbuncle bore, and still persevered. The thing was so nearly done now that she could endure to persevere though the provocation to abandon it was so great. She had even ceased to find fault with her niece, but went on in silence counting the hours till the trouble should be taken off her own shoulders and placed on those of Sir Griffin. It was a great thing to her, almost more than she had expected, that neither Lucinda nor Sir Griffin should have positively declined the marriage. It was impossible that either should retreat from it now.

Luckily for Mrs. Carbuncle Sir Griffin took delight in the show. He did this after a bearish fashion, putting his finger upon little flaws, with an intelligence for which Mrs. Carbuncle had not hitherto given him credit. As to certain ornaments, he observed that the silver was plated and the gold ormolu. A "rope" of pearls he at once detected as being false, and after fingering certain lace he turned up his nose and shook his head. Then, on the Sunday, in Albemarle street, he pointed out to Mrs. Carbuncle sundry articles which he had seen in the bedroom on the Saturday.

"But, my dear Sir Griffin, that's of course," said Mrs. Carbuncle.

"Oh; that's of course, is it?" said Sir Griffin turning up his nose again. "Where did that Delft bowl come from?"

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"It is one of Mortlook's finest Etruscan vases," said Mrs. Carbuncle.

"Oh, I thought that Etruscan vases came from — from somewhere in Greece or Italy," said Sir Griffin.

"I declare that you are shocking," said Mrs. Carbuncle, struggling to maintain her good-humour.

He passed hours of the Sunday in Hertford street, and Lord George also was there for some time. Lizzie, who could hardly devote her mind to the affairs of the wedding, remained alone in her own sitting-room during the greater part of the day; but she did show herself while Lord George was there.

"So I hear that Mackintosh has been here," said Lord George.

"Yes, he was here."

"And what did he say?" Lizzie did not like the way in which the man looked at her, feeling it to be not only unfriendly, but absolutely cruel. It seemed to imply that he knew that her secret was about to be divulged. And what was he to her now that he should be impertinent to her? What he knew, all the world would know before the end of the week. And that other man who knew it already, had been kind to her, had said nothing about perjury, but had explained to her that what she would have to bear would be trouble, and not imprisonment and loss of money. Lord George, to whom she had been so civil, for whom she had spent money, to whom she had almost offered herself and all that she possessed — Lord George, whom she had selected as the first repository of her secret, had spoken no word to comfort her, but had made things look worse for her than they were. Why should she submit to be questioned by Lord

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George? In a day or two the secret which he knew would be no secret. "Never mind what he said, Lord George," she replied.

"Has he found it all out?"

"You had better go and ask himself," said Lizzie. "I am sick of the subject, and I mean to have done with it."

Lord George laughed, and Lizzie hated him for his laugh.

"I declare," said Mrs. Carbuncle, "that you two who were such friends, are always snapping at each other now."

"The fickleness is all on her ladyship's part, not on mine," said Lord George; whereupon Lady Eustace walked out of the room and was not seen again till dinner-time.

Soon afterward Lucinda also endeavoured to escape, but to this Sir Griffin objected. Sir Griffin was in a very good humour, and bore himself like a prosperous bridegroom.

"Come, Luce," he said, "get off your high horse for a little. To-morrow, you know, you must come down altogether."

"So much the more reason for my remaining up to-day."

"I'll be shot if you shall," said Sir Griffin. "Luce, sit in my lap, and give me a kiss."

At this moment Lord George and Mrs. Carbuncle were in the front drawing-room, and Lord George was telling her the true story as to the necklace. It must be explained on his behalf that in doing this he did not consider that he was betraying the trust reposed in him. "They know all about it in Scotland Yard,"

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he said; "I got it from Gager. They were bound to tell me as, up to this week past, every man in the police thought that I had been the master-mind among the thieves. When I think of it I hardly know whether to laugh or cry."

"And she had them all the time?" exclaimed Mrs. Carbuncle.

"Yes; in this house! Did you ever hear of such a little cat? I could tell you more than that. She wanted me to take them and dispose of them."

"No."

"She did though; and now see the way she treats me! Never mind. Don't say a word to her about it till it comes out of itself. She 'll have to be arrested, no doubt."

"Arrested!" Mrs. Carbuncle's further exclamations were stopped by Lucinda's struggles in the other room. She had declined to sit upon the bridegroom's lap, but had acknowledged that she was bound to submit to be kissed. He had kissed her, and then had striven to drag her on to his knee. But she was strong, and had resisted violently, and, as he afterward said, had struck him savagely.

"Of course I struck him," said Lucinda.

"By —— you shall pay for it," said Sir Griffin. This took place in the presence of Lord George and Mrs. Carbuncle, and yet they were to be married to-morrow.

"The idea of complaining that a girl hit you — and the girl who is to be your wife!" said Lord George, as they walked off together.

"I know what to complain of, and what not," said Sir Griffin. "Are you going to let me have that money?"

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"No; I am not," said Lord George, "so there 's an end of that." Nevertheless, they dined together at their club afterward, and in the evening Sir Griffin was again in Hertford street.

This happened on the Sunday, on which day none of the ladies had gone to church. Mr. Emilius well understood the cause of their absence, and felt nothing of a parson's anger at it. He was to marry the couple on the Monday morning, and dined with the ladies on the Sunday. He was peculiarly gracious and smiling, and spoke of the Hymeneals as though they were even more than ordinarily joyful and happy in their promise. To Lizzie he was almost affectionate, and Mrs. Carbuncle he flattered to the top of her bent. The power of the man, in being sprightly under such a load of trouble as oppressed the household, was wonderful. He had to do with three women who were worldly, hard, and given entirely to evil things. Even as regarded the bride, who felt the horror of her position, so much must be, in truth, admitted. Though from day to day and hour to hour she would openly declare her hatred of the things around her, yet she went on. Since she had entered upon life she had known nothing but falsehood and scheming wickedness; and, though she rebelled against the consequences, she had not rebelled against the wickedness. Now, to this unfortunate young woman and her two companions, Mr. Emilius discoursed with an unctuous mixture of celestial and terrestrial glorification, which was proof, at any rate, of great ability on his part. He told them how a good wife was a crown, or rather a chaplet of ethereal roses to her husband, and how high rank and great station in the world made such a chaplet more beautiful and more valuable. His

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work in the vineyard, he said, had fallen lately among the wealthy and nobly born; and though he would not say that he was entitled to take glory on that account, still he gave thanks daily, in that he had been enabled to give his humble assistance toward the running of a godly life to those who, by their example, were enabled to have so wide an effect upon their poorer fellow-creatures. He knew well how difficult it was for a camel to go through the eye of a needle. They had the highest possible authority for that. But Scriptures never said that the camel, which, as he explained it, was simply a thread larger than ordinary thread, could not go through the needle's eye. The camel which succeeded, in spite of the difficulties attending its exalted position, would be peculiarly blessed. And he went on to suggest that the three ladies before him, one of whom was about to enter upon a new phase of life to-morrow, under auspices peculiarly propitious, were, all of them, camels of this description. Sir Griffin, when he came in, received for a while the peculiar attention of Mr. Emilius. "I think, Sir Griffin," he commenced, "that no period of a man's life is so blessed, as that upon which you will enter to-morrow." This he said in a whisper, but it was a whisper audible to the ladies.

"Well; yes; it 's all right, I dare say," said Sir Griffin.

"Well, after all, what is life till a man has met and obtained the partner of his soul? It is a blank, and the blank becomes every day more and more intolerable to the miserable solitary."

"I wonder you don't get married yourself," said Mrs. Carbuncle, who perceived that Sir Griffin was rather astray for an answer.

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"Ah! if one could always be fortunate when one loved," said Mr. Emilius, casting his eyes across to Lizzie Eustace. It was evident to them all that he did not wish to conceal his passion.

It was the object of Mrs. Carbuncle that the lovers should not be left alone together, but that they should be made to think that they were passing the evening in affectionate intercourse. Lucinda hardly spoke, hardly had spoken since her disagreeable struggle with Sir Griffin. He said but little, but with Mrs. Carbuncle was better humoured than usual. Every now and then she made little whispered communications to him, telling that they would be sure to be at the church at eleven to the moment, explaining to him what would be the extent of Lucinda's boxes for the wedding tour, and assuring him that he would find Lucinda's new maid a treasure in regard to his own shirts and pocket handkerchiefs. She toiled marvellously at little subjects, always making some allusion to Lucinda, and never hinting that aught short of Elysium was in store for him. The labour was great; the task was terrible; but now it was so nearly over! And to Lizzie she was very courteous, never hinting by a word or a look that there was any new trouble impending on the score of the diamonds. She, too, as she received the greasy compliments of Mr. Emilius with pretty smiles, had her mind full enough of care.

At last Sir Griffin went, again kissing his bride as he left. Lucinda accepted his embrace without a word and almost without a shudder. "Eleven to the moment, Sir Griffin," said Mrs. Carbuncle, with her best good-humour.

"All right," said Sir Griffin as he passed out of the

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door. Lucinda walked across the room and kept her eyes fixed on his retreating figure as he descended the stairs. Mr. Emilius had already departed, with many promises of punctuality, and Lizzie now withdrew for the night.

"Dear Lizzie, good-night," said Mrs. Carbuncle kissing her.

"Good-night, Lady Eustace," said Lucinda. "I suppose I shall see you to-morrow?"

"See me, of course you will see me! I shall come into your room with the girls after you have had your tea." The girls mentioned were the four bridesmaids, as to whom there had been some difficulty, as Lucinda had neither sister nor cousin, and had contracted no peculiarly tender friendships. But Mrs. Carbuncle had arranged it, and four properly-equipped young ladies were to be in attendance at ten on the morrow.

Then Lucinda and Mrs. Carbuncle were alone. "Of one thing I feel sure," said Lucinda in a low voice.

"What is that, dear?"

"I shall never see Sir Griffin Tewett again."

"You talk in that way on purpose to break me down at the last moment," said Mrs. Carbuncle.

"Dear Aunt Jane, I would not break you down if I could help it. I have struggled so hard, simply that you might be freed from me. We have been very foolish, both of us; but I would bear all the punishment if I could."

"You know that this is nonsense now."

"Very well. I only tell you. I know that I shall never see him again. I will never trust myself alone in his presence. I could not do it. When he touches

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me my whole body is in agony, to be kissed by him is madness!"

"Lucinda, this is very wicked. You are working yourself up to a paroxysm of folly."

"Wicked; yes, I know that I am wicked. There has been enough of wickedness certainly. You don't suppose that I mean to excuse myself?"

"Of course you will marry Sir Griffin to-morrow."

"I shall never be married to him. How I shall escape from him — by dying, or going mad, or by destroying him — God only knows." Then she paused, and her aunt looking into her face almost began to fear that she was in earnest. But she would not take it as at all indicating any real result for the morrow. The girl had often said nearly the same thing before, and had still submitted. "Do you know Aunt, Jane, I don't think I could feel to any man as though I loved him. But for this man — Oh God, how I do detest him! I cannot do it."

"You had better go to bed, Lucinda, and let me come to you in the morning."

"Yes; come to me in the morning; early."

"I will, at eight."

"I shall know then, perhaps."

"My dear, will you come to my room to-night and sleep with me?"

"Oh, no. I have ever so many things to do. I have papers to burn, and things to put away. But come to me at eight. Good-night, Aunt Jane." Mrs. Carbuncle went up to her room with her, kissed her affectionately, and then left her.

She was now really frightened. What would be said of her if she should press the marriage forward to a

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completion, and if, after that, some terrible tragedy should take place between the bride and bridegroom? That Lucinda, in spite of all that had been said, would stand at the altar, and allow the ceremony to be performed, she still believed. Those last words about burning papers and putting things away, seemed to imply that the girl still thought that she would be taken away from her present home on the morrow. But what would come afterward? The horror which the bride expressed was, as Mrs. Carbuncle well knew, no mock feeling, no pretence at antipathy. She tried to think of it and to realise what might, in truth, be the girl's action and ultimate fate when she should find herself in the power of this man whom she so hated. But had not other girls done the same thing, and lived through it all, and become fat, indifferent, and fond of the world? It is only the first step that signifies.

At any rate the thing must go on now; must go on whatever might be the result to Lucinda or to Mrs. Carbuncle herself. Yes; it must go on. There was, no doubt, very much of bitterness in the world for such as them, for persons doomed by the necessities of their position to a continual struggle. It always had been so and always would be so. But each bitter cup must be drained in the hope that the next might be sweeter. Of course the marriage must go on; though doubtless this cup was very bitter.

More then once in the night Mrs. Carbuncle crept up to the door of her niece's room, endeavouring to ascertain what might be going on within. At two o'clock, while she was on the landing, the candle was extinguished, and she could hear Lucinda put herself to bed. At any rate so far things were safe. An

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indistinct, incompleted idea of some possible tragedy had flitted across the mind of the poor woman, causing her to shake and tremble, forbidding her, weary as she was, to lie down; but now she told herself at last that this was an idle phantasy, and she went to bed. Of course Lucinda must go through with it. It had been her own doing, and Sir Griffin was not worse than other men. As she said this to herself, Mrs. Carbuncle hardened her heart by remembering that her own married life had not been peculiarly happy.

Exactly at eight on the following morning she knocked at her niece's door and was at once bidden to enter. "Come in, Aunt Jane." The words cheered her wonderfully. At any rate there had been no tragedy as yet, and as she turned the handle of the door she felt that, as a matter of course, the marriage would go on just like any other marriage. She found Lucinda up and dressed, but so dressed certainly to show no preparation for a wedding toilet. She had on an ordinary stuff morning frock, and her hair was close tucked up and pinned as it might have been had she already prepared herself for a journey. But what astonished Mrs. Carbuncle more than the dress was the girl's manner. She was sitting at a table with a book before her, which was afterward found to be the Bible, and she never turned her head as her aunt entered the room.

"What, up already," said Mrs. Carbuncle, "and dressed?"

"Yes; I am up, and dressed. I have been up ever so long. How was I to lie in bed on such a morning as this? Aunt Jane, I wish you to know as soon as possible that no earthly consideration will induce me to leave this room to-day."

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"What nonsense, Lucinda!"

"Very well; all the same you might as well believe me. I want you to send to Mr. Emilius, and to those girls, and to the man. And you had better get Lord George to let the other people know. I 'm quite in earnest."

And she was in earnest, quite in earnest, though there was a flightiness about her manner which induced Mrs. Carbuncle for a while to think that she was less so than she had been on the previous evening. The unfortunate woman remained with her niece for an hour and a half, imploring, threatening, scolding, and weeping. When the maids came to the door, first one maid and then another, they were refused entrance. It might still be possible, Mrs. Carbuncle thought, that she would prevail. But nothing now could shake Lucinda or induce her even to discuss the subject. She sat there looking steadfastly at the book — hardly answering, never defending herself, but protesting that nothing should induce her to leave the room on that day.

"Do you want to destroy me?" Mrs. Carbuncle said at last.

"You have destroyed me," said Lucinda.

At half-past nine Lizzie Eustace came into the room, and Mrs. Carbuncle, in her trouble, thought it better to take other counsel. Lizzie therefore was admitted.

"Is anything wrong?" asked Lizzie.

"Everything is wrong," said the aunt. "She says that — she won't be married."

"O, Lucinda!"

"Pray speak to her, Lady Eustace. You see it is

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getting so late, and she ought to be nearly dressed now. Of course she must allow herself to be dressed."

"I am dressed," said Lucinda.

"But, dear Lucinda, everybody will be waiting for you," said Lizzie.

"Let them wait, till they're tired. If Aunt Jane does n't choose to send, it is not my fault. I sha'n't go out of this room to-day unless I am carried out. Do you want to hear that I have murdered the man?"

They brought her tea, and endeavoured to induce her to eat and drink. She would take the tea, she said, if they would promise to send to put the people off. Mrs. Carbuncle so far gave way as to undertake to do so, if she would name the next day, or the day following, for the wedding. But on hearing this she arose almost in a majesty of wrath. Neither on this day, nor on the next, nor on any following day, would she yield herself to the wretch whom they had endeavoured to force upon her.

"She must do it, you know," said Mrs. Carbuncle, turning to Lizzie.

"You 'll see if I must," said Lucinda, sitting square at the table with her eyes firmly fixed upon the book.

Then came up the servant to say that the four bridesmaids were all assembled in the drawing-room. When she heard this, even Mrs. Carbuncle gave way, and threw herself upon the bed and wept. "O, Lady Eustace, what are we to do? Lucinda, you have destroyed me. You have destroyed me altogether, after all that I have done for you."

"And what has been done to me, do you think?" said Lucinda.

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Something must be settled. All the servants in the house by this time knew that there would be no wedding, and no doubt some tidings as to the misadventure of the day had already reached the four ladies in the drawing-room. "What am I to do?" said Mrs. Carbuncle, starting up from the bed.

"I really think you had better send to Mr. Emilius," said Lizzie; "and to Lord George."

"What am I to say? Who is there to go to? Oh, I wish that somebody would kill me this minute! Lady Eustace, would you mind going down and telling those ladies to go away?"

"And had I not better send Richard to the church?"

"Oh yes; send anybody, everywhere. I don't know what to do. Oh, Lucinda, this is the unkindest and the wickedest, and most horrible thing that anybody ever did! I shall never, never be able to hold up my head again." Mrs. Carbuncle was completely prostrate, but Lucinda sat square at the table, firm as a rock, saying nothing, making no excuse for herself, with her eyes fixed upon the Bible.

Lady Eustace carried her message to the astonished and indignant bridesmaids, and succeeded in sending them back to their respective homes. Richard, glorious in new livery, forgetting that his flowers were still on his breast, ready dressed to attend the bride's carriage, went with his sad message, first to the church and then to the banqueting-hall in Albemarle street.

"Not any wedding?" said the head-waiter at the hotel. "I knew they was folks as would have a screw loose somewheres. There 's lots to stand for the bill, anyways," he added, as he remembered all the tribute.

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CHAPTER LXX.

ALAS!

No attempt was made to send other messages from Hertford street than those which were taken to the church and to the hotel. Sir Griffin and Lord George went together to the church in a brougham, and on the way the best man rather ridiculed the change in life which he supposed that his friend was about to make.

"I don't in the least know how you mean to get along," said Lord George.

"Much as other men do, I suppose."

"But you 're always sparring, already."

"It 's that old woman that you 're so fond of," said Sir Griffin. "I don't mean to have any ill-humour from my wife, I can tell you. I know who will have the worst of it if there is."

"Upon my word, I think you 'll have your hands full," said Lord George. They got out at a sort of private door attached to the chapel, and were there received by the clerk, who wore a very long face. The news had already come, and had been communicated to Mr. Emilius, who was in the vestry. "Are the ladies here yet?" asked Lord George. The woe-begone clerk told them that the ladies were not yet there, and suggested that they should see Mr. Emilius. Into the presence of Mr. Emilius they were led, and then they heard the truth.

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"Sir Griffin," said Mr. Emilius, holding the baronet by the hand, "I 'm sorry to have to tell you that there 's something wrong in Hertford street."

"What 's wrong?" asked Sir Griffin.

"You don't mean to say that Miss Roanoke is not to be here?" demanded Lord George. "By George, I thought as much — I did indeed."

"I can only tell you what I know, Lord George. Mrs. Carbuncle's servant was here ten minutes since, Sir Griffin, before I came down, and he told the clerk that — that ——"

"What the d—— did he tell him?" asked Sir Griffin.

"He said that Miss Roanoke had changed her mind, and did n't mean to be married at all. That 's all that I can learn from what he says. Perhaps you will think it best to go up to Hertford street?"

"I 'll be —— if I do," said Sir Griffin.

"I am not in the least surprised," repeated Lord George. "Tewett, my boy, we might as well go home to lunch, and the sooner you 're out of town the better."

"I knew that I should be taken in at last by that accursed woman," said Sir Griffin.

"It was n't Mrs. Carbuncle, if you mean that. She 'd have given her left hand to have had it completed. I rather think you 've had an escape, Griff; and if I were you, I 'd make the best of it." Sir Griffin spoke not another word, but left the church with his friend in the brougham that had brought them, and so he disappears from our story. Mr. Emilius looked after him with wistful eyes, regretful for his fee. Had the baronet been less coarse and violent in his language he would

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have asked for it; but he feared that he might be cursed in his own church, before his clerk, and abstained. Late in the afternoon Lord George, when he had administered comfort to the disappointed bridegroom in the shape of a hot lunch, curaçoa, and cigars, walked up to Hertford street, calling at the hotel in Albemarle street on the way. The waiter told him all that he knew. Some thirty or forty guests had come to the wedding-banquet, and had all been sent away with tidings that the marriage had been — postponed.

"You might have told 'em a trifle more than that," said Lord George.

"Postponed was pleasantest, my lord," said the waiter. "Anyways, that was said, and we supposes, my lord, as the things ain't wanted now."

Lord George replied that as far as he knew the things were not wanted, and then continued his way up to Hertford street.

At first he saw Lizzie Eustace, upon whom the misfortune of the day had had a most depressing effect. The wedding was to have been the one morsel of pleasing excitement which would come before she underwent the humble penance to which she was doomed. That was frustrated and abandoned, and now she could think only of Mr. Camperdown, her cousin Frank, and Lady Glencora Palliser. "What 's up now?" said Lord George, with that disrespect which had always accompanied his treatment of her since she had told him her secret. "What 's the meaning of all this?"

"I dare say that you know as well as I do, my lord."

"I must know a good deal if I do. It seems that

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among you there is nothing but one trick upon another."

"I suppose you are speaking of your own friends, Lord George. You doubtless know much more than I do of Miss Roanoke's affairs."

"Does she mean to say that she does n't mean to marry the man at all?"

"So I understand; but really you had better send for Mrs. Carbuncle."

He did send for Mrs. Carbuncle, and after some words with her was taken up into Lucinda's room. There sat the unfortunate girl, in the chair from which she had not moved since the morning. There had come over her face a look of fixed but almost idiotic resolution; her mouth was compressed, and her eyes were glazed, and she sat twiddling her book before her with her fingers. She had eaten nothing since she had got up, and had long ceased to be violent when questioned by her aunt. But nevertheless she was firm enough when her aunt begged to be allowed to write a letter to Sir Griffin, explaining that all this had arisen from temporary indisposition.

"No; it is n't temporary. It is n't temporary at all. You can write to him, but I 'll never come out of this room if I am told that I am to see him."

"What is all this about, Lucinda?" said Lord George, speaking in his kindest voice.

"Is he there?" said she, turning round suddenly.

"Sir Griffin? no indeed. He has left town."

"You 're sure he 's not there. It 's no good his coming. If he comes forever and ever he shall never touch me again — not alive; he shall never touch me again alive." As she spoke she moved across the

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room to the fireplace and grasped the poker in her hand.

"Has she been like that all the morning?" whispered Lord George.

"No — not like — she has been quite quiet. Lucinda!"

"Don't let him come here, then; that 's all. What 's the use? They can't make me marry him. And I won't marry him. Everybody has known that I hated him — detested him. Oh, Lord George, it has been very, very cruel."

"Has it been my fault, Lucinda?"

"She would n't have done it if you had told her not. But you won't bring him again, will you?"

"Certainly not. He means to go abroad."

"Ah, yes; that will be best. Let him go abroad. He knew it all the time, that I hated him. Why did he want me to be his wife? If he has gone abroad I will go down-stairs. But I won't go out of the house. Nothing shall make me go out of the house. Are the bridesmaids gone?"

"Long ago," said Mrs. Carbuncle piteously.

"Then I will go down." And between them, they led her into the drawing-room.

"It is my belief," said Lord George to Mrs. Carbuncle some minutes afterward, "that you have driven her mad."

"Are you going to turn against me?"

"It is true. How you have had the heart to go on pressing it upon her, I could never understand. I am about as hard as a milestone, but I 'll be shot if I could have done it. From day to day I thought that you would have given way."

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"That is so like a man — when it is all over to turn upon a woman and say that she did it."

"Did n't you do it? I thought you did, and that you took a great deal of pride in the doing of it. When you made him offer to her, down in Scotland, and made her accept him, you were so proud that you could hardly hold yourself. What will you do now? Go on, just as though nothing had happened?"

"I don't know what we shall do. There will be so many things to be paid."

"I should think there would, and you can hardly expect Sir Griffin to pay for them. You 'll have to take her away somewhere. You 'll find that she can't remain here. And that other woman will be in prison before the week 's over, I should say, unless she runs away."

There was not much of comfort to be obtained by any of them from Lord George, who was quite as harsh to Mrs. Carbuncle as he had been to Lizzie Eustace. He remained in Hertford street for an hour, and then took his leave, saying that he thought that he also should go abroad. "I did n't think," he said, "that anything could have hurt my character much; but upon my word, between you and Lady Eustace, I begin to find that in every deep there may be a lower depth. All the town has given me the credit for stealing her ladyship's necklace, and now I shall be mixed up in this mock marriage. I should n't wonder if Rooper were to send his bill in to me." (Mr. Rooper was the keeper of the hotel in Albemarle street.) "I think I shall follow Sir Griffin abroad. You have made England too hot to hold me."

And so he left them.

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The evening of that day was a terrible time to the three ladies in Hertfort street, and the following day was almost worse. Nobody came to see them, and not one of them dared to speak of the future. For the third day, the Wednesday, Lady Eustace had made her appointment with Mr. Camperdown, having written to the attorney, in compliance with the pressing advice of Major Mackintosh, to name an hour. Mr. Camperdown had written again, sending his compliments, and saying that he would receive Lady Eustace at the time fixed by her. The prospect of this interview was very bad, but even this was hardly so oppressive as the actual, existing wretchedness of that house. Mrs. Carbuncle, whom Lizzie had always known as high-spirited, bold, and almost domineering, was altogether prostrated by her misfortunes. She was querulous, lachrymose, and utterly despondent. From what Lizzie now learned, her hostess was enveloped in a mass of debt which would have been hopeless even had Lucinda gone off as a bride; but she had been willing to face all that with the object of establishing her niece. She could have expected nothing from the marriage for herself. She well knew that Sir Griffin would neither pay her debts nor give her a home nor lend her money. But to have married the girl who was in her charge would have been in itself a success, and would have in some sort repaid her for her trouble. There would have been something left to show for her expenditure of time and money. But now there was nothing around her but failure and dismay. The very servants in the house seemed to know that ordinary respect was hardly demanded from them.

As to Lucinda, Lizzie felt, from the very hour in

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which she first saw her, on the morning of the intended wedding, that her mind was astray. She insisted on passing the time up in her own room, and always sat with the Bible before her. At every knock at the door, or ring at the bell, she would look round suspiciously, and once she whispered into Lizzie's ear that if ever "he" should come there again she would "give him a kiss with a vengeance." On the Tuesday Lizzie recommended Mrs. Carbuncle to get medical advice, and at last they sent for Mr. Emilius that they might ask counsel of him. Mr. Emilius was full of smiles and consolation, and still allowed his golden hopes as to some Elysian future to crop out; but he did acknowledge at last, in a whispered conference with Lady Eustace, that somebody ought see to Miss Roanoke. Somebody did see Miss Roanoke, and the doctor who was thus appealed to shook his head. Perhaps Miss Roanoke had better be taken into the country for a little while.

"Dear Lady Eustace," said Mrs. Carbuncle, "now you can be a friend indeed," meaning, of course, that an invitation to Portray Castle would do more than could anything else toward making straight the crooked things of the hour. Mrs. Carbuncle, when she made the request, of course knew of Lizzie's coming troubles; but let them do what they could to Lizzie, they could not take away her house.

But Lizzie felt at once that this would not suit. "Ah, Mrs. Carbuncle," she said, "you do not know the condition which I am in myself!"

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CHAPTER LXXI.

LIZZIE IS THREATENED WITH THE TREADMILL.

EARLY on the Wednesday morning, two or three hours before the time fixed for Lizzie's visit to Mr. Camperdown, her cousin Frank came to call upon her. She presumed him to be altogether ignorant of all that Major Mackintosh had known, and therefore endeavoured to receive him as though her heart were light.

"Oh, Frank," said she, "you have heard of our terrible misfortune here?"

"I have heard so much," said he gravely, "that I hardly know what to believe, and what not to believe."

"I mean about Miss Roanoke's marriage?"

"Oh, yes; I have been told that it is broken off."

Then Lizzie, with affected eagerness, gave him a description of the whole affair, declaring how horrible, how tragic, the thing had been from its very commencement. "Don't you remember, Frank, down at Portray, they never really cared for each other? They became engaged the very time you were there."

"I have not forgotten it."

"The truth is, Lucinda Roanoke did not understand what real love meant. She had never taught herself to comprehend what is the very essence of love, and as for Sir Griffin Tewett, though he was anxious to marry her, he never had any idea of love at all. Did not you always feel that, Frank?"

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"I 'm sorry you have had so much to do with them, Lizzie."

"There 's no help for spilt milk, Frank; and, as for that, I don't suppose that Mrs. Carbuncle can do me any harm. The man is a baronet, and the marriage would have been respectable. Miss Roanoke has been eccentric, and that has been the long and the short of it. What will be done, Frank, with all the presents that were bought?"

"I have n't an idea. They 'd better be sold to pay the bills. But I came to you, Lizzie, about another piece of business."

"What piece of business?" she asked, looking him in the face for a moment, trying to be bold, but trembling as she did so. She had believed him to be ignorant of her story, but she had soon perceived, from his manner to her, that he knew it all, or at least that he knew so much that she would have to tell him all the rest. There could be no longer any secret with him. Indeed there could be no longer any secret with anybody. She must be prepared to encounter a world accurately informed as to every detail of the business which, for the last three months, had been to her a burden so oppressive that, at some periods, she had sunk altogether under the weight. She had already endeavoured to realise her position, and to make clear to herself the condition of her future life. Lord George had talked to her of perjury and prison, and had tried to frighten her by making the very worst her faults. According to him, she would certainly be made to pay for the diamonds, and would be enabled to do so by saving her income during a long term of incarceration. This was a terrible prospect of things; and she had almost be-

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lieved in it. Then the major had come to her. The major, she thought, was the truest gentleman she had ever seen, and her best friend. Ah — if it had not been for the wife and seven children, there might still have been comfort! That which had been perjury with Lord George, had by the major been so simply, and yet so correctly called an incorrect version of facts! And so it was — and no more than that. Lizzie, in defending herself to herself, felt that, though cruel magistrates and hard-hearted lawyers and pig-headed jurymen might call her little fault by the name of perjury, it could not be real, wicked perjury, because the diamonds had been her own. She had defrauded nobody — had wished to defraud nobody — if the people had only left her alone. It had suited her to give — an incorrect version of facts, because people had troubled themselves about her affairs; and now all this had come upon her! The major had comforted her very greatly; but still — what would the world say? Even he, kind and comfortable as he had been, had made her understand that she must go into court and confess the incorrectness of her own version. She believed every word the major said. Ah, there was a man worthy to be believed — a man of men! They could not take away her income or her castle. They could not make her pay for the diamonds. But still — what would the world say? And what would her lovers say? What one of her lovers thought proper to say, she had already heard. Lord George had spoken out, and had made himself very disagreeable. Lord Fawn, she knew, would withdraw the renewal of his offer, let her answer to him be what it might. But what would Frank say? And now Frank was with her, looking into her face with severe eyes.

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She was more than ever convinced that the life of a widow was not suited for her and that, among her several lovers, she must settle her wealth and her heart upon some special lover. Neither her wealth nor her heart would be in any way injured by the confession which she was prepared to make. But then men are so timid, so false, and so blind! In regard to Frank, whom she now believed that she had loved with all the warmth of her young affections, from the first moment in which she had seen him after Sir Florian's death — she had been at great trouble to clear the way for him. She knew of his silly engagement to Lucy Morris, and was willing to forgive him that offence. She knew that he could not marry Lucy, because of his pennilessness and his indebtedness; and therefore she had taken the trouble to see Lucy, with the view of making things straight on that side. Lucy had of course, been rough with her, and ill-mannered, but Lizzie thought that, upon the whole, she had succeeded. Lucy was rough and ill-mannered, but was, at the same time, what the world calls good, and would hardly persevere after what had been said to her. Lizzie was sure that, a month since, her cousin would have yielded himself to her willingly, if he could only have freed himself from Lucy Morris. But now, just in this very nick of time, which was so momentous to her, the police had succeeded in unravelling her secret, and there sat Frank, looking at her with stern, ill-natured eyes, like an enemy rather than a lover.

"What piece of business?" she asked, in answer to his question. She must be bold — if she could. She must brazen it out with him, if only she could be strong enough to put on her brass in his presence.

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He had been so stupidly chivalrous in believing all her stories about the robbery when nobody else had quite believed them, that she felt that she had before her a task that was very disagreeable and very difficult. She looked up at him, struggling to be bold, and then her glance sank before his gaze and fell upon the floor.

"I do not at all wish to pry into your secrets," he said.

Secrets from him! Some such exclamation was on her lips, when she remembered that her special business, at the present moment, was to acknowledge a secret which had been kept from him.

"It is unkind of you to speak to me in that way," said she.

"I am quite in earnest. I do not wish to pry into your secrets. But I hear rumours which seem to be substantiated; and though, of course, I could stay away from you——"

"Oh — whatever happens, pray, pray do not stay away from me. Where am I to look for advice if you stay away from me?"

"That is all very well, Lizzie."

"Ah, Frank, if you desert me, I am undone."

"It is of course true that some of the police have been with you lately?"

"Major Mackintosh was here, about the end of last week — a most kind man, altogether a gentleman, and I was so glad to see him."

"What made him come?"

"What made him come?" How should she tell her story? "Oh, he came — of course, about the robbery. They have found out everything. It was the jeweller, Benjamin, who concocted it all. That horrid, sly

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girl I had, Patience Crabstick, put him up to it. And there were two regular housebreakers. They have found it all out at last."

"So I hear."

"And Major Mackintosh came to tell me about it."

"But the diamonds are gone!"

"Oh, yes — those weary, weary diamonds. Do you know, Frank, that, though they were my own, as much as the coat you wear is your own, I am glad they are gone, then I am glad that the police have not found them. They tormented me so that I hated them. Don't you remember that I told you how I longed to throw them into the sea, and be rid of them forever?"

"That, of course, was a joke."

"It was no joke, Frank. It was solemn, serious truth."

"What I want to know is — where were they stolen?"

That of course was the question which hitherto Lizzie Eustace had answered by an incorrect version of facts, and now she must give the true version. She tried to put a bold face upon it, but it was very difficult. A face bold with brass she could not assume. Perhaps a little bit of acting might serve her turn, and a face that should be tender rather than bold.

"Oh, Frank!" she exclaimed, bursting into tears.

"I always supposed that they were taken at Carlisle," said Frank. Lizzie fell on her knees, at his feet, with her hands clasped together, and her one long lock of hair hanging down so as to touch his arm. Her eyes were bright with tears, but were not, as yet, wet and red with weeping. Was not this confession enough? Was he so hard-hearted as to make her tell her own disgrace in spoken words? Of course he knew well

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enough now, when the diamonds had been stolen. If he were possessed of any tenderness, any tact, any manliness, he would go on, presuming that question to have been answered.

"I don't quite understand it all," he said, laying his hand softly upon her shoulder. "I have been led to make so many statements to other people, which now seem to have been — incorrect! It was only the box that was taken at Carlisle?"

"Only the box." She could answer that question.

"But the thieves thought that the diamonds were in the box?"

"I suppose so. But, oh, Frank, don't cross-question me about it. If you could know what I have suffered, you would not punish me any more. I have got to go to Mr. Camperdown's this very day. I offered to do that at once, and I sha'n't have strength to go through it if you are not kind to me now. Dear, dear Frank — do be kind to me."

And he was kind to her. He lifted her up to the sofa and did not ask her another question about the necklace. Of course she had lied to him and to all the world. From the very commencement of his intimacy with her, he had known that she was a liar, and what else could he have expected but lies? As it happened, this particular lie had been very big, very efficacious, and the cause of boundless troubles. It had been wholly unnecessary, and from the first, though injurious to many, more injurious to her than to any other. He himself had been injured, but it seemed to him now that she had absolutely ruined herself. And all this had been done for nothing — had been done, as he thought, that Mr. Camperdown might

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be kept in the dark, whereas all the light in the world would have assisted Mr. Camperdown nothing. He brought to mind, as he stood over her, all those scenes which she had so successfully performed in his presence since she had come to London — scenes in which the robbery in Carlisle had been discussed between them. She had on these occasions freely expressed her opinion about the necklace, saying in a low whisper, with a pretty little shrug of her shoulders, that she presumed it to be impossible that Lord George should have been concerned in the robbery. Frank had felt, as she said so, that some suspicion was intended by her to be attached to Lord George. She had wondered whether Mr. Camperdown had known anything about it. She had hoped that Lord Fawn would now be satisfied. She had been quite convinced that Mr. Benjamin had the diamonds. She had been indignant that the police had not traced the property. She had asked in another whisper — a very low whisper indeed — whether it was possible that Mrs. Carbuncle should know more about it than she was pleased to tell? And all the while the necklace had been lying in her own desk, and she had put it there with her own hands!

It was marvellous to him that the woman could have been so false and have sustained her falsehood so well. And this was his cousin, his well-beloved; as a cousin, certainly well-beloved; and there had doubtless been times in which he had thought that he would make her his wife! He could not but smile as he stood looking at her, contemplating all the confusion which she had caused, and thinking how very little the disclosure of her iniquity seemed to confound herself.

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"Oh, Frank, do not laugh at me," she said.

"I am not laughing, Lizzie; I am only wondering."

"And now, Frank, what had I better do?"

"Ah, that is difficult, is it not? You see I hardly know all the truth yet. I do not want to know more, but how can I advise you?"

"I thought you knew everything."

"I don't suppose anybody can do anything to you."

"Major Mackintosh says that nobody can. He quite understands that they were my own property, and that I had a right to keep them in my desk if I pleased. Why was I to tell everybody where they were? Of course I was foolish, and now they are lost. It is I that have suffered. Major Mackintosh quite understands that, and says that nobody can do anything to me; only I must go to Mr. Camperdown."

"You will have to be examined again before a magistrate."

"Yes; I suppose I must be examined. You will go with me, Frank, won't you?" He winced, and made no immediate reply. "I don't mean to Mr. Camperdown, but before the magistrate. Will it be in a court?"

"I suppose so."

"The gentleman came here before. Could n't he come here again?" Then he explained to her the difference of her present position, and in doing so he did say something of her iniquity. He made her understand that the magistrate had gone out of his way at the last inquiry, believing her to be a lady who had been grievously wronged, and one, therefore, to whom much consideration was due. "And I have been grievously wronged," said Lizzie. But now she

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would be required to tell the truth in opposition to the false evidence which she had formerly given; and she would herself be exempted from prosecution for perjury only on the ground that she would be called on to criminate herself in giving evidence against criminals whose crimes had been deeper than her own. "I suppose they can't quite eat me," she said, smiling through her tears.

"No; they won't eat you," he replied gravely.

"And you will go with me?"

"Yes; I suppose I had better do so."

"Ah; that will be so nice." The idea of the scene at the police-court was not at all "nice" to Frank Greystock. "I shall not mind what they say to me as long as you are by my side. Everybody will know that they were my own, won't they?"

"And there will be the trial afterward."

"Another trial?" Then he explained to her the course of affairs; that the men might not improbably be tried at Carlisle for stealing the box, and again in London for stealing the diamonds; that two distinct acts of burglary had been committed, and that her evidence would be required on both occasions. He told her also that her attendance before the magistrate on Friday would only be a preliminary ceremony, and that before the thing was over she would doubtless be doomed to bear a great deal of annoyance, and to answer very many disagreeable questions. "I shall care for nothing if you will only be at my side," she exclaimed.

He was very urgent with her to go to Scotland as soon as her examination before the magistrates should be over, and was much astonished at the excuse she

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made for not doing so. Mrs. Carbuncle had borrowed all her ready money; but as she was now in Mrs. Carbuncle's house she could repay herself a portion of the loan by remaining there and eating it out. She did not exactly say how much Mrs. Carbuncle had borrowed, but she left an impression on Frank's mind that it was about ten times the actual sum. With this excuse he was not satisfied, and told her that she must go to Scotland, if only for the sake of escaping from the Carbuncle connection. She promised to obey him if he would be her convoy. The Easter holidays were just now at hand, and he could not refuse on the plea of time. "Oh, Frank, do not refuse me this; only think how terribly forlorn is my position!" He did not refuse, but he did not quite promise. He was still tender-hearted toward her in spite of her enormities. One iniquity, perhaps her worst iniquity, he did not yet know. He had not as yet heard of her disinterested appeal to Lucy Morris.

When he left her she was almost joyous for a few minutes, till the thought of her coming interview with Mr. Camperdown again overshadowed her. She had dreaded two things chiefly — her first interview with her cousin Frank after he should have learned the truth, and those perils in regard to perjury with which Lord George had threatened her. Both these bugbears had now vanished. That dear man, the major, had told her that there would be no such perils, and her cousin Frank had not seemed to think so very much of her lies and treachery! He had still been affectionate with her; he would support her before the magistrate, and would travel with her to Scotland. And after that who could tell what might come next? How fool-

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ish she had been to trouble herself as she had done — almost to choke herself with an agony of fear, because she had feared detection. Now she was detected, and what had come of it? That great officer of justice, Major Mackintosh, had been almost more than civil to her; and her dear cousin Frank was still a cousin, dear as ever. People, after all, did not think so very much of perjury — of perjury such as hers, committed in regard to one's own property. It was that odious Lord George who had frightened her instead of comforting, as he would have done had there been a spark of the true Corsair poetry about him. She did not feel comfortably content as to what might be said of her by Lady Glencora and the Duke of Omnium, but she was almost inclined to think that Lady Glencora would support her. Lady Glencora was no poor, mealy-mouthed thing, but a woman of the world, who understood what was what. Lizzie no doubt wished that the trials and examinations were over; but her money was safe. They could not take away Portray, nor could they rob her of four thousand a year. As for the rest, she could live it down.

She had ordered the carriage to take her to Mr. Camperdown's chambers, and now she dressed herself for the occasion. He should not be made to think, at any rate by her outside appearance, that she was ashamed of herself. But before she started she had just a word with Mrs. Carbuncle. "I think I shall go down to Scotland on Saturday," she said, proclaiming her news not in the most gracious manner.

"That is if they let you go," said Mrs. Carbuncle.

"What you mean? Who is to prevent me?"

"The police. I know all about it, Lady Eustace,

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and you need not look like that. Lord George informs me that you will — probably be locked up to-day or to-morrow."

"Lord George is a story-teller. I don't believe he ever said so. And if he did, he knows nothing about it."

"He ought to know, considering all that you have made him suffer. That you should have gone on with the necklace in your own box all the time, letting people think that he had taken it, and accepting his attentions all the while, is what I cannot understand! And however you were able to look those people at Carlisle in the face, passes me! Of course, Lady Eustace, you can't stay here after what has occurred."

"I shall stay just as long as I like."

"Poor, dear Lucinda! I do not wonder that she should be driven beyond herself by so horrible a story. The feeling that she has been living all this time in the same house with a woman who had deceived all the police — all the police — has been too much for her. I know it has been almost too much for me." And yet, as Lizzie at once understood, Mrs. Carbuncle knew nothing now which she had not known when she made her petition to be taken to Portray. And this was the woman, too, who had borrowed her money last week, whom she had entertained for months at Portray, and who had pretended to be her bosom-friend. "You are quite right in getting off to Scotland as soon as possible — if they will let you go," continued Mrs. Carbuncle. "Of course you could not stay here. Up to Friday night it can be permitted; but the servants had better wait upon you in your own rooms."

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"How dare you talk to me in that way?" screamed Lizzie.

"When a woman has committed perjury," said Mrs. Carbuncle, holding up both her hands in awe and grief, "nothing too bad can possibly be said to her. You are amenable to the outraged laws of the country, and it is my belief that they can keep you upon the treadmill and bread and water for months and months, if not for years." Having pronounced this terrible sentence, Mrs. Carbuncle stalked out of the room. "That they can sequester your property for your creditors I know," she said, returning for a moment and putting her head within the door.

The carriage was ready, and it was time for Lizzie to start if she intended to keep her appointment with Mr. Camperdown. She was much flustered and weakened by Mrs. Carbuncle's ill-usage, and had difficulty in restraining herself from tears. And yet what the woman had said was false from beginning to end. The maid, who was the successor of Patience Crabstick, was to accompany her, and as she passed through the hall she so far recovered herself as to be able to conceal her dismay from the servants.

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CHAPTER LXXII.

LIZZIE'S TRIUMPHS.

REPORTS had, of course, reached Mr. Camperdown of the true story of the Eustace diamonds. He had learned that the Jew jeweller had made a determined set at them, having in the first place hired housebreakers to steal them at Carlisle, and having again hired the same housebreakers to steal them from the house in Hertford street, as soon as he knew that Lady Eustace had herself secreted them. By degrees this information had reached him, but not in a manner to induce him to declare himself satisfied with the truth. But now Lady Eustace was coming to him — as he presumed, to confess everything.

When he first heard that the diamonds had been stolen at Carlisle, he was eager, with Mr. Eustace, in contending that the widow's liability in regard to the property was not at all the less because she had managed to lose it through her own pig-headed obstinacy. He consulted his trusted friend, Mr. Dove, on the occasion, making out another case for the barrister, and Mr. Dove had opined that if it could be first proved that the diamonds were the property of the estate and not of Lady Eustace, and afterwards proved that they had been stolen through her laches, then could the Eustace estate recover the value from her estate. As she had carried the diamonds about with her in an absurd man-

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ner, her responsibility might probably be established; but the non-existence of ownership by her must be first declared by a Vice-Chancellor, with probability of appeal to the Lords Justices and to the House of Lords. A bill in Chancery must be filed, in the first place, to have the question of ownership settled; and then, should the estate be at length declared the owner, restitution of the property which had been lost through the lady's fault must be sought at common law.

That had been the opinion of the Turtle Dove, and Mr. Camperdown had at once submitted to the law of his great legal mentor. But John Eustace had positively declared when he heard it that no more money should be thrown away in looking after property which would require two lawsuits to establish, and which when established might not be recovered. "How can we make her pay ten thousand pounds? She might die first," said John Eustace — and Mr. Camperdown had been forced to yield. Then came the second robbery, and gradually there was spread about a report that the diamonds had been in Hertford street all the time; that they had not been taken at Carlisle, but certainly had been stolen at last.

Mr. Camperdown was again in a fever, and again had recourse to Mr. Dove and to John Eustace. He learned from the police all that they would tell him, and now the whole truth was to be divulged to him by the chief culprit herself. For to the mind of Mr. Camperdown the two housebreakers, and Patience Crabstick, and even Mr. Benjamin himself, were white as snow compared with the blackness of Lady Eustace. In his estimation no punishment could be too great for her, and yet he began to understand that she would escape scot-

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free! Her evidence would be needed to convict the thieves, and she could not be prosecuted for perjury when once she had been asked for her evidence.

"After all, she has only told a fib about her own property," said the Turtle Dove.

"About property not her own," replied Mr. Camperdown stoutly.

"Her own till the contrary shall have been proved; her own for all purposes of defence before a jury, if she were prosecuted now. Were she tried for the perjury, your attempt to obtain possession of the diamonds would be all so much in her favour." With infinite regrets, Mr. Camperdown began to perceive that nothing could be done to her.

But she was to come to him and let him know from her own lips, facts of which nothing more than rumour had yet reached him. He had commenced his bill in Chancery, and had hitherto stayed proceedings simply because it had been reported — falsely, as it now appeared — that the diamonds had been stolen at Carlisle. Major Mackintosh, in his desire to use Lizzie's evidence against the thieves, had recommended her to tell the whole truth openly to those who claimed the property on behalf of her husband's estate; and now, for the first time in her life, this odious woman was to visit him in his own chambers.

He did not think it expedient to receive her alone. He consulted his mentor, Mr. Dove, and his client, John Eustace, and the latter consented to be present. It was suggested to Mr. Dove that he might, on so peculiar an occasion as this, venture to depart from the established rule, and visit the attorney on his own quarter-deck; but he smiled, and explained that,

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though he was altogether superior to any such prejudice as that, and would not object at all to call on his friend, Mr. Camperdown, could any good effect arise from his doing so, he considered that were he to be present on this occasion he would simply assist in embarrassing the poor lady.

On this very morning, while Mrs. Carbuncle was abusing Lizzie in Hertford street, John Eustace and Mr. Camperdown were in Mr. Dove's chambers, whither they had gone to tell him of the coming interview. The Turtle Dove was sitting back in his chair, with his head leaning forward as though it were going to drop from his neck, and the two visitors were listening to his words. "Be merciful, I should say," suggested the barrister. John Eustace was clearly of opinion that they ought to be merciful. Mr. Camperdown did not look merciful. "What can you get by harassing the poor, weak, ignorant creature?" continued Mr. Dove. "She has hankered after her bauble, and has told falsehoods in her efforts to keep it. Have you never heard of older persons, and more learned persons, and persons nearer to ourselves, who have done the same?" At that moment there was presumed to be great rivalry, not unaccompanied by intrigue, among certain leaders of the learned profession, with reference to various positions of high honour and emolument, vacant or expected to be vacant. A Lord Chancellor was about to resign, and a Lord Justice had died. Whether a somewhat unpopular Attorney-General should be forced to satisfy himself with the one place, or allowed to wait for the other, had been debated in all the newspapers. It was agreed that there was a middle course in reference to a certain second-class chief-justiceship —

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only that the present second-class chief-justice objected to shelving himself. There existed considerable jealousy, and some statements had been made which were not, perhaps, strictly founded on fact. It was understood both by the attorney and by the member of Parliament, that the Turtle Dove was referring to these circumstances when he spoke of baubles and falsehoods, and of learned persons near to themselves. He himself had hankered after no bauble, but, as is the case with many men and women who are free from such hankerings, he was hardly free from that dash of malice which the possession of such things in the hands of others is so prone to excite. "Spare her," said Mr. Dove. "There is no longer any material question as to the property, which seems to be gone irrecoverably. It is, upon the whole, well for the world, that property so fictitious as diamonds should be subject to the risk of such annihilation. As far as we are concerned, the property is annihilated, and I would not harass the poor, ignorant, young creature."

As Eustace and the attorney walked across from the old to the new square, the former declared that he quite agreed with Mr. Dove. "In the first place, Mr. Camperdown, she is my brother's widow." Mr. Camperdown with sorrow admitted the fact. "And she is the mother of the head of our family. It should not be for us to degrade her; but rather to protect her from degradation, if that be possible."

"I heartily wish she had got her merits before your poor brother ever saw her," said Mr. Camperdown.

Lizzie, in her fears, had been very punctual; and when the two gentlemen reached the door leading up to Mr. Camperdown's chambers, the carriage was

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already standing there. Lizzie had come up the stairs and had been delighted at hearing that Mr. Camperdown was out, and would be back in a moment. She instantly resolved that it did not become her to wait. She had kept her appointment, had not found Mr. Camperdown at home, and would be off as fast as her carriage wheels could take her. But, unfortunately, while with a gentle murmur she was explaining to the clerk how impossible it was that she should wait for a lawyer who did not keep his own appointment, John Eustace and Mr. Camperdown appeared upon the landing, and she was at once convoyed into the attorney's particular room.

Lizzie, who always dressed well, was now attired as became a lady of rank, who had four thousand a year, and was the intimate friend of Lady Glencora Palliser. When last she saw Mr. Camperdown she had been arrayed for a long, dusty, summer journey down to Scotland, and neither by her outside garniture nor by her manner had she then been able to exact much admiration. She had been taken by surprise in the street, and was frightened. Now, in difficulty though she was, she resolved that she would hold up her head and be very brave. She was a little taken aback when she saw her brother-in-law, but she strove hard to carry herself with confidence.

"Ah, John," she said, "I did not expect to find you with Mr. Camperdown."

"I though it best that I should be here, as a friend," he said.

"It makes it much pleasanter for me, of course," said Lizzie. "I am not quite sure that Mr. Camperdown will allow me to regard him as a friend."

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"You have never had any reason to regard me as your enemy, Lady Eustace," said Mr. Camperdown. "Will you take a seat? I understand that you wish to state the circumstances under which the Eustace family diamonds were stolen while they were in your hands."

"My own diamonds, Mr. Camperdown."

"I cannot admit that for a moment, my lady."

"What does it signify?" said Eustace. "The wretched stones are gone forever; and whether they were, of right, the property of my sister-in-law or of her son, cannot matter now."

Mr. Camperdown was irritated and shook his head. It cut him to the heart that everybody should take the part of the wicked, fraudulent woman who had caused him such infinite trouble. Lizzie saw her opportunity, and was bolder than ever. "You will never get me to acknowledge that they were not my own," she said. "My husband gave them to me, and I know that they were my own."

"They have been stolen, at any rate," said the lawyer.

"Yes; they have been stolen."

"And now will you tell us how?"

Lizzie looked round upon her brother-in-law and sighed. She had never yet told the story in all its nakedness, although it had been three or four times extracted from her by admission. She paused, hoping that questions might be asked her which she could answer by easy monosyllables, but not a word was uttered to help.

"I suppose you know all about it," she said at last.

"I know nothing about it," said Mr. Camperdown.

"We heard that your jewel-case was taken out of your room at Carlisle and broken open," said Eustace.

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"So it was. They broke into my room in the dead of night, when I was in bed and fast asleep, and took the case away. When the morning came everybody rushed into my room, and I was so frightened that I did not know what I was doing. How would your daughter bear it if two men had cut away the locks and got into her bedroom when she was asleep? You don't think about that at all."

"And where was the necklace?" asked Eustace.

Lizzie remembered that her friend the major had specially advised her to tell the whole truth to Mr. Camperdown, suggesting that by doing so she would go far toward saving herself from any prosecution.

"It was under my pillow," she whispered.

"And why did you not tell the magistrate that it had been under your pillow?"

Mr. Camperdown's voice, as he put to her this vital question, was severe, and almost justified the little burst of sobs which came forth as a prelude to Lizzie's answer. "I did not know what I was doing. I don't know what you expect from me. You had been persecuting me ever since Sir Florian's death, about the diamonds, and I did n't know what I was to do. They were my own, and I thought I was not obliged to tell everybody where I kept them. There are things which nobody tells. If I were to ask you all your secrets would you tell them? When Sir Walter Scott was asked whether he wrote the novels, he did n't tell."

"He was not upon his oath, Lady Eustace."

"He did take his oath, ever so many times. I don't know what difference an oath makes. People ain't obliged to tell their secrets, and I would n't tell mine."

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"The difference is this, Lady Eustace; that if you give false evidence upon oath, you commit perjury."

"How was I to think of that, when I was so frightened and confused that I did n't know where I was, or what I was doing? There — now I have told you everything."

"Not quite everything. The diamonds were not stolen at Carlisle, but they were stolen afterwards. Did you tell the police what you had lost, or the magistrate, after the robbery in Hertford street?"

"Yes; I did. There was some money taken, and rings, and other jewelry."

"Did you tell them that the diamonds had been really stolen on that occasion?"

"They never asked me, Mr. Camperdown."

"It is all as clear as a pikestaff, John," said the lawyer.

"Quite clear, I should say," replied Mr. Eustace.

"And I suppose I may go," said Lizzie, rising from her chair.

There was no reason why she should not go; and, indeed, now that the interview was over, there did not seem to be any reason why she should have come. Though they had heard so much from her own mouth, they knew no more than they had known before. The great mystery had been elucidated, and Lizzie Eustace had been found to be the intriguing villain; but it was quite clear, even to Mr. Camperdown, that nothing could be done to her. He had never really thought that it would be expedient that she should be prosecuted for perjury, and he now found that she must go utterly scatheless, although, by her obstinacy and dishonesty, she had inflicted so great a

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loss on the distinguished family which had taken her to its bosom.

"I have no reason for wishing to detain you, Lady Eustace," he said. "If I were to talk forever, I should not, probably, make you understand the extent of the injury you have done, or teach you to look in a proper light at the position in which you have placed yourself. When your husband died, good advice was given you, and given, I think, in a very kind way. You would not listen to it, and you see the result."

"I ain't a bit ashamed of anything," said Lizzie.

"I suppose not," rejoined Mr. Camperdown.

"Good-by, John." And Lizzie put out her hand to her brother-in-law.

"Good-by, Lizzie."

"Mr. Camperdown, I have the honour to wish you good-morning." Lizzie made a low courtesy to the lawyer, and was then attended to her carriage by the lawyer's clerk. She had certainly come forth from the interview without fresh wounds.

"The barrister who will have the cross-examining of her at the Central Criminal Court," said Mr. Camperdown, as soon as the door was closed behind her, "will have a job of work on his hands. There 's nothing a pretty woman can't do when she 's got rid of all sense of shame."

"She is a very great woman," said John Eustace, "a very great woman; and, if the sex could have its rights, would make an excellent lawyer." In the mean time Lizzie Eustace returned home to Hertford street in triumph.

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CHAPTER LXXIII.

LIZZIE'S LAST LOVER.

LIZZIE'S interview with the lawyer took place on the Wednesday afternoon, and, on her return to Hertford street she found a note from Mrs. Carbuncle.

"I have made arrangements for dining out to-day, and shall not return till after ten. I will do the same to-morrow, and on every day till you leave town, and you can breakfast in your own room. Of course you will carry out your plan for leaving this house on Monday. After what has passed, I shall prefer not to meet you again. J. C."

And this was written by a woman who, but a few days since, had borrowed £150 from her, and who at this moment had in her hands fifty pounds' worth of silver-plate, supposed to have been given to Lucinda, and which clearly ought to have been returned to the donor, when Lucinda's marriage was postponed — as the newspapers had said. Lucinda, at this time, had left the house in Hertford street, but Lizzie had not been informed whither she had been taken. She could not apply to Lucinda for restitution of the silver, which was, in fact, held at that moment by the Albemarle street hotel-keeper as part security for his debt; and she was quite sure that any applica-

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tion to Mrs. Carbuncle for either the silver or the debt would be unavailing. But she might, perhaps, cause annoyance by a letter, and could, at any rate, return insult for insult. She therefore wrote to her late friend.

"MADAM: I certainly am not desirous of continuing an acquaintance into which I was led by false representations, and in the course of which I have been almost absurdly hospitable to persons altogether unworthy of my kindness. Yourself and niece, and your especial friend, Lord George Carruthers, and that unfortunate young man, your niece's lover, were entertained at my country-house, as my guests, for some months. I am here, in my own right, by arrangement; and, as I pay more than a proper share of the expense of the establishment, I shall stay as long as I please, and go when I please.

"In the mean time, as we are about to part, certainly forever, I must beg you at once to repay me the sum of £150, which you have borrowed from me; and I must also insist on your letting me have back the present of silver which was prepared for your niece's marriage. That you should retain it as a perquisite for yourself cannot for a moment be thought of, however convenient it might be to yourself.

"Yours, etc.,

"E. EUSTACE."

As far as the application for restitution went, or indeed in regard to the insult, she might as well have written to a milestone. Mrs. Carbuncle was much too strong, and had fought her battle with the world much too long, to regard such word-pelting as that. She paid no attention to the note, and as she had come to

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terms with the agent of the house, by which she was to evacuate it on the following Monday, a fact which was communicated to Lizzie by the servant, she did not much regard Lizzie's threat to remain there. She knew, moreover, that arrangements were already being made for the journey to Scotland.

Lizzie had come back from the attorney's chambers in triumph, and had been triumphant, when she wrote her note to Mrs. Carbuncle; but her elation was considerably repressed by a short notice which she read in the fashionable evening paper of the day, She always took the fashionable evening paper, and had taught herself to think that life without it was impossible. But on this afternoon she quarrelled with that fashionable evening paper forever. The popular and well-informed organ of intelligence in question informed its readers, that the Eustace diamonds — etc., etc. In fact, it told the whole story; and then expressed a hope that, as the matter had from the commencement been one of great interest to the public, who had sympathised with Lady Eustace deeply as to the loss of her diamonds, Lady Eustace would be able to explain that part of her conduct, which certainly, at present, was quite unintelligible. Lizzie threw the paper from her with indignation, asking what right newspaper scribblers could have to interfere with the private affairs of such persons as herself.

But on this evening the question of her answer to Lord Fawn was the one which most interested her. Lord Fawn had taken long in the writing of his letter, and she was justified in taking what time she pleased in answering it; but, for her own sake, it had better be answered quickly. She had tried her hand at two

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different replies, and did not at all doubt but what she would send the affirmative answer, if she were sure that these latter discoveries would not alter Lord Fawn's decision. Lord Fawn had distinctly told her that, if she pleased, he would marry her. She would please; having been much troubled by the circumstances of the past six months. But then, was it not almost a certainty that Lord Fawn would retreat from his offer on learning the facts which were now so well known as to have been related in the public papers? She thought that she would take one more night to think of it.

Alas; she took one night too many. On the next morning, while she was still in bed, a letter was brought to her from Lord Fawn, dated from his club the preceding evening.

"Lord Fawn presents his compliments to Lady Eustace. Lady Eustace will be kind enough to understand that Lord Fawn recedes altogether from the proposition made by him in his letter to Lady Eustace dated March 28th last. Should Lady Eustace think proper to call in question the propriety of this decision on the part of Lord Fawn, she had better refer the question to some friend, and Lord Fawn will do the same. Lord Fawn thinks it best to express his determination, under no circumstances, to communicate again personally with Lady Eustace on this subject, or, as far as he can see at present, on any other."

The letter was a blow to her, although she had felt quite certain that Lord Fawn would have no difficulty in escaping from her hands as soon as the story of the diamonds should be made public. It was a blow to

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her, although she had assured herself a dozen times that a marriage with such a one as Lord Fawn, a man who had not a grain of poetry in his composition, would make her unutterably wretched. What escape would her heart have had from itself in such a union? This question she had asked herself over and over again, and there had been no answer to it. But then why had she not been beforehand with Lord Fawn? Why had she not rejected his second offer with the scorn which such an offer deserved? Ah, there was her misfortune; there was her fault!

But, with Lizzie Eustace, when she could not do a thing which it was desirable that she should be known to have done, the next consideration was whether she could not so arrange as to seem to have done it. The arrival of Lord Fawn's note just as she was about to write to him, was unfortunate. But she would still write to him, and date her letter before the time that his was dated. He probably would not believe her date. She hardly ever expected to be really believed by anybody. But he would have to read what she wrote; and writing on this pretence, she would avoid the necessity of alluding to his last letter.

Neither of the notes which she had by her quite suited the occasion, so she wrote a third. The former letter in which she declined his offer was, she thought, very charmingly insolent, and the allusion to his lordship's scullion would have been successful, had it been sent on the moment, but now a graver letter was required; and the graver letter, the date of which, it will be observed, was the day previous to the morning on which she had received Lord Fawn's last note, was as follows:

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"HERTFORD ST., Wednesday, April 3.

"MY LORD: I have taken a week to answer the letter which your lordship has done me the honour of writing to me, because I have thought it best to have time for consideration in a matter of such importance. In this I have copied your lordship's official caution.

"I think I never read a letter so false, so unmanly, and so cowardly, as that which you have found yourself capable of sending to me.

"You became engaged to me when, as I admit with shame, I did not know your character. You have since repudiated me and vilified my name, simply because, having found that I had enemies, and being afraid to face them, you wished to escape from your engagement. It has been cowardice from the beginning to the end. Your whole conduct to me has been one long, unprovoked insult, studiously concocted, because you have feared that there might possibly be some trouble for you to encounter. Nobody ever heard of anything so mean, either in novels or in real life.

"And now you again offer to marry me — because you are again afraid. You think you will be thrashed, I suppose, if you decline to keep your engagement; and feel that if you offer to go on with it, my friends cannot beat you. You need not be afraid. No earthly consideration would induce me to be your wife. And if any friend of mine should look at you as though he meant to punish you, you can show him this letter, and make him understand that it is I who have refused to be your wife, and not you who have refused to be my husband.

"E. EUSTACE."

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This epistle Lizzie did send, believing she could add nothing to its insolence, let her study it as she might. And she thought, as she read it for the fifth time, that it sounded as though it had been written before her receipt of the final note from himself, and that it would, therefore, irritate him the more.

This was to be the last week of her sojourn in town, and then she was to go down and bury herself at Portray, with no other companionship than that of the faithful Macnulty, who had been left in Scotland for the last three months as nurse-in-chief to the little heir. She must go and give her evidence before the magistrate on Friday, as to which she had already received an odious slip of paper — but Frank would accompany her. Other misfortunes had passed off so lightly that she hardly dreaded this. She did not quite understand why she was to be so banished, and thought much on the subject. She had submitted herself to Frank's advice when first she had begun to fear that her troubles would be insuperable. Her troubles were now disappearing; and, as for Frank — what was Frank to her, that she should obey him? Nevertheless, her trunks were being already packed, and she knew that she must go. He was to accompany her on her journey, and she would still have one more chance with him.

As she was thinking of all this, Mr. Emilius, the clergyman, was announced. In her loneliness she was delighted to receive any visitor, and she knew that Mr. Emilius would be at least courteous to her. When he had seated himself, he at once began to talk about the misfortune of the unaccomplished marriage, and in a very low voice hinted that from the beginning to end

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there had been something wrong. He had always feared that an alliance based on a footing that was so openly "pecuniary" — he declared that the word pecuniary expressed his meaning better than any other epithet — could not lead to matrimonial happiness. "We all know," said he, "that our dear friend, Mrs. Carbuncle, had views of her own, quite distinct from her niece's happiness. I have the greatest possible respect for Mrs. Carbuncle, and I may say esteem; but it is impossible to live long in any degree of intimacy with Mrs. Carbuncle without seeing that she is — mercenary."

"Mercenary! indeed she is," said Lizzie.

"You have observed it? Oh, yes; it is so, and it casts a shadow over a character which otherwise has so much to charm."

"She is the most insolent and the most ungrateful woman that I ever heard of!" exclaimed Lizzie with energy. Mr. Emilius opened his eyes, but did not contradict her assertion. "As you have mentioned her name, Mr. Emilius, I must tell you. I have done everything for that woman. You know how I treated her down in Scotland."

"With a splendid hospitality," said Mr. Emilius.

"Of course she did not pay for anything there."

"Oh, no!" The idea of any one being called upon to pay for what one ate and drank at a friend's house was peculiarly painful to Mr. Emilius.

"And I have paid for everything here. That is to say, we have made an arrangement, very much in her favour. And she has borrowed large sums of money from me."

"I am not at all surprised at that," said Mr. Emilius.

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"And when that poor unfortunate girl, her niece, was to be married to poor Sir Griffin Tewett, I gave her a whole service of plate."

"What unparalleled generosity!"

"Would you believe she has taken the whole for her own base purposes? And then what do you think she has done?"

"My dear Lady Eustace, hardly anything would astonish me."

Lizzie suddenly found a difficulty in describing to her friend the fact that Mrs. Carbuncle was endeavouring to turn her out of the house, without also alluding to her own troubles about the robbery. "She has actually told me," she continued, "that I must leave the house without a day's warning. But I believe the truth is, that she has run so much into debt that she cannot remain!"

"I know that she is very much in debt, Lady Eustace."

"But she owed me some civility. Instead of that, she has treated me with nothing but insolence. And why, do you think? It is all because I would not allow her to take that poor, insane young woman to Portray Castle."

"You don't mean that she asked to go there?"

"She did, though."

"I never heard such impertinence in my life — never," said Mr. Emilius, again opening his eyes and shaking his head.

"She proposed that I should ask them both down to Portray, for — for — of course it would have been almost forever. I don't know how I should have got rid of them. And that poor young woman is mad,

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you know — quite mad. She never recovered herself after that morning. Oh, what I have suffered about that unhappy marriage, and the cruel, cruel way in which Mrs. Carbuncle urged it on. Mr. Emilius, you can't conceive the scenes which have been acted in this house during the last month. It has been dreadful! I would n't go through such a time again for anything that could be offered to me. It has made me so ill that I am obliged to go down to Scotland to recruit my health."

"I heard that you were going to Scotland, and I wished to have an opportunity of saying just a word to you in private before you left." Mr. Emilius had thought a good deal about this interview, and had prepared himself for it with considerable care. He knew, with tolerable accuracy, the whole story of the necklace, having discussed it with Mrs. Carbuncle, who, as the reader will remember, had been told the tale by Lord George. He was aware of the engagement with Lord Fawn, and of the growing intimacy which had existed between Lord George and Lizzie. He had been watchful, diligent, patient, and had at last become hopeful. When he learned that his beloved was about to start for Scotland, he felt that it would be well that he should strike a blow before she went. As to a journey down to Ayrshire, that would be nothing to one so enamoured as was Mr. Emilius; and he would not scruple to show himself at the castle door without invitation. Whatever may have been his deficiencies, Mr. Emilius did not lack the courage needed to carry such an enterprise as this to a happy conclusion. As far as pluck and courage might serve a man, he was well served by his own gifts. He could, with-

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out a blush, or a quiver in his voice, have asked a duchess to marry him, with ten times Lizzie's income. He had now considered deeply whether, with the view of prevailing, it would be better that he should allude to the lady's trespasses in regard to the diamonds, or that he should pretend to be in ignorance; and he had determined that ultimate success might, with most probability, be achieved by a bold declaration of the truth. "I know how desperately you must be in want of some one to help you through your troubles, and I know also that your grand lovers will avoid you because of what you have done, and therefore you had better take me at once. Take me, and I 'll bring you through everything. Refuse me, and I 'll crush you." Such were the arguments which Mr. Emilius had determined to use, and such the language — of course with some modifications. He was now commencing his work, and was quite resolved to leave no stone unturned in carrying it to a successful issue. He drew his chair nearer to Lizzie as he announced his desire for a private interview, and leaned over toward her with his two hands closed together between his knees. He was a dark, hookey-nosed, well-made man, with an exuberance of greasy hair, who would have been considered handsome by many women had there not been something, almost amounting to a squint, amiss with one of his eyes. When he was preaching it could hardly be seen, but in the closeness of private conversation it was disagreeable.

"Oh, indeed;" said Lizzie, with a look of astonishment, perfectly well-assumed. She had already begun to consider whether, after all, Mr. Emilius — would do.

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"Yes; Lady Eustace; it is so. You and I have known each other now for many months, and I have received the most unaffected pleasure from the acquaintance, may I not say from the intimacy, which has sprung up between us?" Lizzie did not forbid the use of the pleasant word, but merely bowed. "I think that as a devoted friend and a clergyman, I shall not be thought to be intruding on private ground in saying that circumstances have made me aware of the details of the robberies by which you have been so cruelly persecuted." So the man had come about the diamonds and not to make an offer! Lizzie raised her eyebrows, and bowed her head with the slightest possible motion. "I do not know how far your friends or the public may condemn you, but——"

"My friends don't condemn me at all, sir."

"I am so glad to hear it!"

"Nobody has dared to condemn me except this impudent woman here, who wants an excuse for not paying me what she owes me."

"I am delighted. I was going to explain that although I am aware you have infringed the letter of the law, and made yourself liable to proceedings which may, perhaps, be unpleasant——"

"I ain't liable to anything unpleasant at all, Mr. Emilius."

"Then my mind is greatly relieved. I was about to remark, having heard in the outer world that there were those who ventured to accuse you of — of perjury——"

"Nobody has dared to accuse me of anything. What makes you come here and say such things?"

"Ah, Lady Eustace. It is because these calumnies are spoken so openly behind your back."

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"Who speaks them? Mrs. Carbuncle and Lord George Carruthers, my enemies."

Mr. Emilius was beginning to feel that he was not making progress. "I was on the point of observing to you that, according to the view of the matter which I as a clergyman have taken, you were altogether justified in the steps which you took for the protection of property which was your own, but which had been attacked by designing persons."

"Of course I was justified," said Lizzie.

"You know best, Lady Eustace, whether any assistance I can offer will avail you anything."

"I don't want any assistance, Mr. Emilius, thank you."

"I certainly have been given to understand that they who ought to stand by you with the closest devotion have, in this period of what I may, perhaps, call — tribulation, deserted your side with cold selfishness."

"But there is n't any tribulation, and nobody has deserted my side."

"I was told that Lord Fawn ——"

"Lord Fawn is an idiot."

"Quite so; no doubt."

"And I have deserted him. I wrote to him this very morning in answer to a pressing letter from him to renew our engagement, to tell him that that was out of the question. I despise Lord Fawn, and my heart never can be given where my respect does not accompany it."

"A noble sentiment, Lady Eustace, which I reciprocate completely. And now, to come to what I may call the inner purport of my visit to you this morning — the sweet cause of my attendance on you, let me

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assure you that I should not now offer you my heart unless with my heart went the most perfect respect and esteem which any man ever felt for a woman." Mr. Emilius had found the necessity of coming to the point by some direct road, as the lady had refused to allow him to lead up to it in the manner he had proposed to himself. He still thought that what he had said might be efficacious, as he did not for a moment believe her assertions as to her own friends and the non-existence of any trouble as to the oaths which she had falsely sworn; but she carried the matter with a better courage than he had expected to find, and drove him out of his intended line of approach. He had, however, seized his opportunity without losing much time.

"What on earth do you mean, Mr. Emilius?"

"I mean to lay my heart, my hand, my fortunes, my profession, my career at your feet. I make bold to say of myself that I have, by my own unaided eloquence and intelligence, won for myself a great position in this swarming metropolis. Lady Eustace, I know your great rank. I feel your transcendent beauty, ah, too acutely. I have been told that you are rich; but I, myself, who venture to approach you as a suitor for your hand, am also somebody in the world. The blood that runs in my veins is as illustrious as your own, having descended to me from the great and ancient nobles of my native country. The profession which I have adopted is the grandest which ever filled the heart of man with aspirations. I have barely turned my thirty-second year, and I am known as the greatest preacher of my day, though I preach in a language which is not my own. Your House of Lords would be open to me as a spiritual peer would I condescend

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to come to terms with those who crave the assistance which I could give them. I can move the masses. I can touch the hearts of men. And in this great assemblage of mankind which you call London, I can choose my own society, among the highest of the land. Lady Eustace, will you share with me my career and my fortunes? I ask you because you are the only woman whom my heart has stooped to love."

The man was a nasty, greasy, lying, squinting Jew preacher; an impostor, over forty years of age, whose greatest social success had been achieved when, through the agency of Mrs. Carbuncle, he made his way into Portray Castle. He was about as near an English mitre as had been that great man of a past generation, the Deputy Shepherd. He was a creature to loathe, because he was greasy and a liar and an impostor. But there was a certain manliness in him. He was not afraid of the woman; and in pleading his cause with her he could stand up for himself courageously. He had studied his speech, and having studied it he knew how to utter the words. He did not blush nor stammer nor cringe. Of grandfather or grandmother belonging to himself he had probably never heard, but he could so speak of his noble ancestors as to produce belief in Lizzie's mind; and almost succeeded in convincing her that he was, by the consent of mankind, the greatest preacher of the day. While he was making his speech she almost liked his squint. She certainly liked the grease and nastiness. Presuming, as she naturally did, that something of what he said was false, she liked the lies. There was a dash of poetry about him; and poetry, as she thought, was not compatible with humdrum truth. A man, to be a man in

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her eyes, should be able to swear that all his geese are swans; should be able to reckon his swans by the dozen, though he have not a feather belonging to him, even from a goose's wing. She liked his audacity; and then when he was making love he was not afraid of talking out boldly about his heart. Nevertheless he was only Mr. Emilius the clergyman; and she had means of knowing that his income was not generous. Though she admired his manner and his language, she was quite aware that he was in pursuit of her money; and, from the moment in which she first understood his object, she was resolved that she would never become the wife of Mr. Emilius as long as there was a hope as to Frank Greystock.

"I was told, Mr. Emilius," she said, "that you, some time since, had a wife."

"It was a falsehood, Lady Eustace. From motives of pure charity I gave a home to a distant cousin. I was then in a land of strangers, and my life was misinterpreted. I made no complaint, but sent the lady back to her native country. My compassion could supply her wants there as well as here."

"Then you still support her?"

Mr. Emilius, thinking there might be danger in asserting that he was subject to such an encumbrance, replied, "I did do so, till she found a congenial home as the wife of an honest man."

"Oh, indeed. I 'm quite glad to hear that."

"And now, Lady Eustace, may I venture to hope for a favourable answer?"

Upon this, Lizzie made him a speech as long, and almost as well-turned as his own. Her heart had of late been subject to many vicissitudes. She had lost

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the dearest husband that a woman had ever worshipped. She had ventured, for purposes with reference to her child, which she could not now explain, to think once again of matrimony with a person of high rank, who had turned out to be unworthy of her. She had receded (Lizzie, as she said this, acted the part of receding, with a fine expression of scornful face) and after that she was unwilling to entertain any further idea of marriage. Upon hearing this, Mr. Emilius bowed low, and before the street door was closed against him had begun to calculate how much a journey to Scotland would cost him.

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CHAPTER LXXIV.

LIZZIE AT THE POLICE-COURT.

On the Wednesday and Thursday Lizzie had been triumphant; for she had certainly come out unscathed from Mr. Camperdown's chambers, and a lady may surely be said to triumph when a gentleman lays his hand, his heart, his fortunes, and all that he has got, at her feet; but when the Friday came, though she was determined to be brave, her heart did sink within her bosom. She understood well that she would be called upon to admit in public the falseness of the oaths she had sworn upon two occasions; and that, though she would not be made amenable to any absolute punishment for her perjury, she would be subject to very damaging remarks from the magistrate, and, probably, also from some lawyers employed to defend the prisoners. She went to bed in fairly good spirits, but in the morning she was cowed and unhappy. She dressed herself from head to foot in black, and prepared for herself a heavy, black veil. She had ordered from the livery-stable a brougham for the occasion, thinking it wise to avoid the display of her own carriage. She breakfasted early, and then took a large glass of wine to support her. When Frank called for her, at a quarter to ten, she was quite ready, and grasped his hand almost without a word. But she looked into his face with her eyes filled with tears.

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"It will soon be over," he said. She pressed his hand, and made him a sign, to show that she was ready to follow him to the door. "The case will come on at once," he said, "so that you will not be kept waiting."

"Oh, you are so good; so good to me." She pressed his arm, and did not speak again till they reached the police-court.

There was a great crowd about the office, which was in a little by-street, and so circumstanced that Lizzie's brougham could hardly make its way up to the door. But way was at once made for her when Frank handed her out of it, and the policemen about the place were as courteous to her as though she had been the Lord Chancellor's wife. Evil-doing will be spoken of with bated breath and soft words even by policemen, when the evil-doer comes in a carriage and with a title. Lizzie was led at once into a private room, and told that she would be kept there only a very few minutes. Frank made his way into the court and found that two magistrates had just seated themselves on the bench. One would have sufficed for the occasion; but this was a case of great interest, and even police-magistrates are human in their interests. Greystock was allowed to get round to the bench and whisper a word or two to the gentleman who was to preside. The magistrate nodded his head, and the case began.

The unfortunate Mr. Benjamin had been sent back in durance vile from Vienna, and was present in the court. With him, as joint malefactor, stood Mr. Smiler, the great housebreaker, a huge, ugly, resolute-looking scoundrel, possessed of enormous strength, who was very intimately known to the police, with whom he had had various dealings since he had been turned out

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upon the town to earn his bread some fifteen years before. Indeed, long before that he had known the police — as far as his memory went back he had always known them. But the sportive industry of his boyish years was not now counted up against him. In the last fifteen years his biography had been written with all the accuracy due to the achievements of a great man; and during those hundred and eighty months he had spent over one hundred in prison, and had been convicted twenty-three times. He was now growing old, as a thief, and it was thought by his friends that he would be settled for life in some quiet retreat. Mr. Benjamin was a very respectable-looking man of about fifty, with slightly grizzled hair, with excellent black clothes, and showing, by a surprised air, his astonishment at finding himself in such a position. He spoke constantly, both to his attorney and to the barrister who was to show cause why he should not be committed, and throughout the whole morning was very busy. Smiler, who was quite at home, and who understood his position, never said a word to any one. He stood, perfectly straight, looking at the magistrate, and never for a moment leaning on the rail before him during the four hours that the case consumed. Once, when his friend, Billy Cann, was brought into court to give evidence against him, dressed up to the eyes, serene and sleek, as when we saw him once before at the "Rising Sun," in Meek street, Smiler turned a glance upon him which, to the eyes of all present, contained a threat of most bloody revenge. But Billy knew the advantages of his situation, and nodded at his old comrade, and smiled. His old comrade was very much stronger than he, and possessed of many

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natural advantages; but, perhaps, upon the whole, his old comrade had been the less intelligent thief of the two. It was thus that the by-standers read the meaning of Billy's smile.

The case was opened very shortly and very clearly by the gentleman who was employed for the prosecution. It would all, he said, have laid in a nut-shell, had it not been complicated by a previous robbery at Carlisle. Were it necessary, he said, there would be no difficulty in convicting the prisoners for that offence also, but it had been thought advisable to confine the prosecution to the act of burglary committed in Hertford street. He stated the facts of what had happened at Carlisle, merely for explanation, but would state nothing that could not be proven. Then he told all that the reader knows about the iron box. But the diamonds were not then in the box; and he told that story also, treating Lizzie with great tenderness as he did so. Lizzie, all this time, was sitting behind her veil in the private room, and did not hear a word of what was going on. Then he came to the robbery in Hertford street. He would prove by Lady Eustace that the diamonds were left by her in a locked desk, were so deposited, though all her friends believed them to have been taken at Carlisle; and he would, moreover, prove by accomplices that they were stolen by two men, the younger prisoner at the bar being one of them, and the witness who would be adduced, the other; that they were given up by these men to the elder prisoner, and that a certain sum had been paid by him for the execution of the two robberies. There was much more of it; but to the reader, who knows all, it would be but a thrice-told tale. He then said that he first proposed

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to take the evidence of Lady Eustace, the lady who had been in possession of the diamonds when they were stolen. Then Frank Greystock left the court, and returned with poor Lizzie on his arm.

She was handed to a chair, and, after she was sworn, was told that she might sit down; but she was requested to remove her veil, which she had replaced as soon as she had kissed the book. The first question asked her was very easy. Did she remember the night at Carlisle? Would she tell the history of what occurred on that night? When the box was stolen, were the diamonds in it? No; she had taken the diamonds out for security, and had kept them under her pillow. Then came a bitter moment, in which she had to confess her perjury before the Carlisle bench; but even that seemed to pass off smoothly. The magistrate asked one severe question.

"Do you mean to say, Lady Eustace, that you gave false evidence on that occasion, knowing it to be false?"

"I was in such a state, sir, from fear, that I did not know what I was saying," exclaimed Lizzie, bursting into tears, and stretching forth toward the bench her two clasped hands with the air of a suppliant.

From that moment the magistrate was altogether on her side, and so were the public. Poor, ignorant, ill-used young creature; and then so lovely! That was the general feeling. But she had not as yet come beneath the harrow of that learned gentleman on the other side, whose best talents were due to Mr. Benjamin. Then she told all she knew about the other robbery. She certainly had not said, when examined on that occasion, that the diamonds had then been taken.

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She had omitted to name the diamonds in her catalogue of the things stolen; but she was sure that she had never said that they were not then taken. She had said nothing about the diamonds, knowing them to be her own, and preferring to lose them, to the trouble of again referring to the night at Carlisle. Such was her evidence for the prosecution, and then she was turned over to the very learned and very acute gentleman whom Mr. Benjamin had hired for his defence, or rather, to show cause why he should not be sent for trial.

It must be owned that poor Lizzie did receive from his hands some of that punishment which she certainly deserved. This acute and learned gentleman seemed to possess for the occasion the blandest and most dulcet voice that ever was bestowed upon an English barrister. He addressed Lady Eustace with the softest words, as though he hardly dared to speak to a woman so eminent for wealth, rank, and beauty; but nevertheless he asked her some very disagreeable questions.

"Was he to understand that she went of her own will before the bench of magistrates at Carlisle, with the view of enabling the police to capture certain persons for stealing certain jewels, while she knew that the jewels were actually in her own possession?"

Lizzie, confounded by the softness of his voice as joined to the harshness of the question, could hardly understand him, and he repeated it thrice, becoming every time more and more mellifluous, "Yes," said Lizzie at last.

"Yes?" he asked.

"Yes," said Lizzie.

"Your ladyship did send the Cumberland police after

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men for stealing jewels which were in your ladyship's own hands when you swore the information?"

"Yes," said Lizzie.

"And your ladyship knew that the information was untrue?"

"Yes," said Lizzie.

"And the police were pursuing the men for many weeks?"

"Yes," said Lizzie.

"On your information?"

"Yes," said Lizzie, through her tears.

"And your ladyship knew, all the time, that the poor men were altogether innocent of taking the jewels?"

"But they took the box," said Lizzie, through her tears.

"Yes," said the acute and learned gentleman, "somebody took your ladyship's iron box out of the room, and you swore that the diamonds had been taken. Was it not the fact that legal proceedings were being taken against you for the recovery of the diamonds by persons who claimed the property?"

"Yes," said Lizzie.

"And these persons withdrew their proceedings as soon as they heard that the diamonds had been stolen?"

Soft as he was in his manner, he nearly reduced Lizzie Eustace to fainting. It seemed to her that the questions would never end. It was in vain that the magistrate pointed out to the learned gentleman that Lady Eustace had confessed her own false swearing, both at Carlisle and in London, a dozen times, for he continued his questions over and over again, harping chiefly on the affair at Carlisle, and saying very little as

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to the second robbery in Hertford street. His idea was to make it appear that Lizzie had arranged the robbery with the view of defrauding Mr. Camperdown, and that Lord George Carruthers was her accomplice. He even asked her, almost in a whisper, and with the sweetest smile, whether she was not engaged to marry Lord George. When Lizzie denied this, he still suggested that some such alliance might be in contemplation. Upon this, Frank Greystock called upon the magistrate to defend Lady Eustace from such unnecessary vulgarity, and there was a scene in the court. Lizzie did not like the scene, but it helped to protect her from the contemplation of the public, who, of course, were much gratified by high words between two barristers.

Lady Eustace was forced to remain in the private room during the examination of Patience Crabstick and Mr. Cann, and so did not hear it. Patience was a most obdurate and difficult witness — extremely averse to say evil of herself, and on that account unworthy of the good things which she had received. But Billy Cann was charming — graceful, communicative, and absolutely accurate. There was no shaking him. The learned and acute gentleman who tried to tear him in pieces could do nothing with him. He was asked whether he had not been a professional thief for ten years.

"Ten or twelve," said he.

"Did he expect that any juryman would believe him on his oath?"

"Not unless I am fully corroborated."

"Can you look that man in the face — that man who is at any rate so much honester than yourself?" asked

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the learned gentleman with pathos. Billy said that he thought he could, and the way in which he smiled upon Smiler caused a roar through the whole court.

The two men were, as a matter of course, committed for trial at the Central Criminal Court, and Lizzie Eustace was bound by certain penalties to come forward when called upon, and give her evidence again.

"I am glad that it is over," said Frank, as he left her at Mrs. Carbuncle's hall door.

"Oh, Frank, dearest Frank, where should I be if it were not for you?"

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CHAPTER LXXV.

LORD GEORGE GIVES HIS REASONS.

LADY EUSTACE did not leave the house during the Saturday and Sunday, and engaged herself exclusively with preparing for her journey. She had no further interview with Mrs. Carbuncle, but there were messages between them, and even notes were written. They resulted in nothing. Lizzie was desirous of getting back the spoons and forks, and, if possible, some of her money. The spoons and forks were out of Mrs. Carbuncle's power — in Albemarle street — and the money had, of course, been spent. Lizzie might have saved herself the trouble, had it not been that it was a pleasure to her to insult her late friend, even though, in doing so, new insults were heaped upon her own head. As for the trumpery spoons, they — so said Mrs. Carbuncle — were the property of Miss Roanoke, having been made over to her, unconditionally, long before the wedding, as a part of a separate pecuniary transaction. Mrs. Carbuncle had no power of disposing of Miss Roanoke's property. As to the money which Lady Eustace claimed, Mrs. Carbuncle asserted that, when the final accounts should be made up between them, it would be found that there was a considerable balance due to Mrs. Carbuncle; but even were there anything due to Lady Eustace, Mrs. Carbuncle would decline to pay it, as she was informed that all moneys possessed

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by Lady Eustace were now confiscated to the Crown by reasons of the PERJURIES — the word was doubly scored in Mrs. Carbuncle's note — which Lady Eustace had committed. This, of course, was unpleasant; but Mrs. Carbuncle did not have the honours of the battle all to herself. Lizzie also said some unpleasant things which, perhaps, were the more unpleasant because they were true. Mrs. Carbuncle had come pretty nearly to the end of her career, whereas Lizzie's income, in spite of her perjuries, was comparatively untouched. The undoubted mistress of Portray Castle, and mother of the Sir Florian Eustace of the day, could still despise and look down upon Mrs. Carbuncle, although she were known to have told fibs about the family diamonds.

Lord George always came to Hertford street on a Sunday, and Lady Eustace left word for him, with the servant, that she would be glad to see him before her journey into Scotland. "Goes to-morrow, does she?" said Lord George to the servant. "Well, I 'll see her." And he was shown up to her room before he went to Mrs. Carbuncle.

Lizzie, in sending for him, had some half-formed idea of a romantic farewell. The man, she thought, had behaved very badly to her; had accepted very much from her hands, and had refused to give her anything in return; had become the first repository of her great secret, and had placed no mutual confidence in her. He had been harsh to her, and unjust; and then, too, he had declined to be in love with her! She was full of spite against Lord George, and would have been glad to injure him; but, nevertheless, there would be some excitement

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in a farewell, in which some mock affection might be displayed — and she would have an opportunity of abusing Mrs. Carbuncle.

"So you are off to-morrow?" said Lord George, taking his place on the rug before her fire, and looking down at her with his head a little on one side. Lizzie's anger against the man chiefly arose from a feeling that he treated her with all a Corsair's freedom without any of a Corsair's tenderness. She could have forgiven the want of deferential manner, had there been any devotion — but Lord George was both impudent and indifferent.

"Yes," she said. "Thank goodness, I shall get out of this frightful place to-morrow, and soon have once more a roof of my own over my head. What an experience I have had since I have been here!"

"We have all had an experience," said Lord George, still looking at her with that half-comic turn of his face — almost as though he were investigating some curious animal of which so remarkable a specimen had never before come under his notice.

"No woman ever intended to show a more disinterested friendship than I have done; and what has been my return?"

"You mean to me — disinterested friendship to me?" And Lord George tapped his breast lightly with his fingers. His head was still a little on one side, and there was still the smile upon his face.

"I was alluding particularly to Mrs. Carbuncle."

"Lady Eustace, I cannot take charge of Mrs. Carbuncle's friendships. I have enough to do to look after my own. If you have any complaint to make against me, I will at least listen to it."

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"God knows I do not want to make complaints," said Lizzie, covering her face with her hands.

"They don't do much good — do they? It 's better to take people as you find 'em, and then make the best of 'em. They 're a queer lot; ain't they — the sort of people one meets about in the world?"

"I don't know what you mean by that, Lord George."

"Just what you were saying when you talked of your experiences. These experiences do surprise one. I have knocked about the world a great deal, and would have almost said that nothing would surprise me. You are no more than a child to me, but you have surprised me."

"I hope I have not injured you, Lord George."

"Do you remember how you rode to hounds the day your cousin took that other man's horse? That surprised me."

"Oh, Lord George, that was the happiest day of my life. How little happiness there is for people!"

"And when Tewett got that girl to say she 'd marry him, the coolness with which you bore all the abomination of it in your house — for people who were nothing to you; that surprised me!"

"I meant to be so kind to you all."

"And when I found that you always travelled with ten thousand pounds' worth of diamonds in a box, that surprised me very much. I thought that you were a very dangerous companion."

"Pray don't talk about the horrid necklace."

"Then came the robbery, and you seemed to lose your diamonds without being at all unhappy about them. Of course, we understand that now." On

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hearing this, Lizzie smiled, but did not say a word. "Then I perceived that I — I was supposed to be the thief. You — you yourself could n't have suspected me of taking the diamonds, because — because you 'd got them, you know, all safe in your pocket. But you might as well own the truth now. Did n't you think that it was I who stole the box?"

"I wish it had been you," said Lizzie laughing.

"All that surprised me. The police were watching me every day as a cat watches a mouse, and thought that they surely had got the thief when they found that I had dealings with Benjamin. Well, you — you were laughing at me in your sleeve all the time."

"Not laughing, Lord George."

"Yes, you were. You had got the kernel yourself, and thought that I had taken all the trouble to crack the nut and had found myself with nothing but the shell. Then, when you found you could n't eat the kernel, that you could n't get rid of the swag without assistance, you came to me to help you. I began to think then that you were too many for all of us. By Jove, I did! Then I heard of the second robbery, and, of course, I thought you had managed that too."

"Oh, no," said Lizzie.

"Unfortunately you did n't; but I thought you did. And you thought that I had done it! Mr. Benjamin was too clever for us both, and now he is going to have penal servitude for the rest of his life. I wonder who will be the better of it all. Who 'll have the diamonds at last?"

"I do not in the least care. I hate the diamonds. Of course I would not give them up, because they were my own."

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"The end seems to be that you have lost your property, and sworn ever so many false oaths, and have brought all your friends into trouble, and have got nothing by it. What was the good of being so clever?"

"You need not come here to tease me, Lord George."

"I came here because you sent for me. There's my poor friend Mrs. Carbuncle, declares that all her credit is destroyed, and her niece unable to marry, and her house taken away from her — all because of her connection with you."

"Mrs. Carbuncle is — is — is —. Oh, Lord George, don't you know what she is?"

"I know that Mrs. Carbuncle is in a very bad way, and that that girl has gone crazy, and that poor Griff has taken himself off to Japan, and that I am so knocked about that I don't know where to go; and somehow it seems all to have come from your little manœuvres. You see we have all of us been made remarkable; have n't we?"

"You are always remarkable, Lord George."

"And it is all your doing. To be sure you have lost your diamonds for your pains. I would n't mind it so much if anybody were the better for it. I should n't have begrudged even Benjamin the pull, if he 'd got it."

He stood there, still looking down upon her, speaking with a sarcastic submissive tone, and, as she felt, intending to be severe to her. Though she believed that she hated him, she would have liked to get up some show of an affectionate farewell; some scene, in which there might have been tears, and tenderness, and

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poetry, and perhaps a parting caress; but with his jeering words and sneering face, he was as hard as a rock. He was now silent, but still looking down upon her as he stood motionless on the rug, so that she was compelled to speak again. "I sent for you, Lord George, because I did not like the idea of parting with you forever, without one word of adieu."

"You are going to tear yourself away, are you?"

"I am going to Portray on Monday."

"And never coming back any more? You 'll be up here before the season is over, with fifty more wonderful schemes in your little head. So Lord Fawn is done with, is he?"

"I have told Lord Fawn that nothing shall induce me ever to see him again."

"And cousin Frank?"

"My cousin attends me down to Scotland."

"Oh — h. That makes it altogether another thing. He attends you down to Scotland, does he? Does Mr. Emilius go too?"

"I believe you are trying to insult me, sir."

"You can't expect but what a man should be a little jealous, when he has been so completely cut out himself. There was a time, you know, when even cousin Frank was n't a better fellow than myself."

"Much you thought about it, Lord George."

"Well — I did. I thought about it a good deal, my lady. And I liked the idea of it very much." Lizzie pricked up her ears. In spite of all his harshness, could it be that he should be the Corsair still? "I am a rambling, uneasy, ill-to-do sort of man, but still I thought about it. You are pretty, you know — uncommonly pretty."

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"Don't, Lord George."

"And I'll acknowledge that the income goes for much. I suppose that's real at any rate?"

"Well — I hope so. Of course it's real. And so is the prettiness, Lord George — if there is any."

"I never doubted that, Lady Eustace. But when it came to my thinking that you had stolen the diamonds, and you thinking that I had stolen the box ——! I'm not a man to stand on trifles, but, by George! it would n't do then."

"Who wanted it to do?" said Lizzie. "Go away. You are very unkind to me. I hope I may never see you again. I believe you care more for that odious vulgar woman down-stairs than you do for anybody else in the world."

"Ah dear! I have known her for many years, Lizzie, and that both covers and discovers many faults. One learns to know how bad one's old friends are, but then one forgives them, because they are old friends."

"You can't forgive me — because I'm bad, and only a new friend."

"Yes, I will. I forgive you all, and hope you may do well yet. If I may give you one bit of advice at parting, it is to caution you against being clever when there is nothing to get by it."

"I ain't clever at all," said Lizzie, beginning to whimper.

"Good-by, my dear."

"Good-by," said Lizzie. He took her hand in one of his; patted her on the head with the other, as though she had been a child, and then left her.

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CHAPTER LXXVI.

LIZZIE RETURNS TO SCOTLAND.

FRANK GREYSTOCK, the writer fears, will not have recommended himself to those readers of this tale who think the part of lover to the heroine should be always filled by a young man with heroic attributes. And yet the young member for Bobsborough was by no means deficient in fine qualities, and perhaps was quite as capable of heroism as the majority of barristers and members of Parliament among whom he consorted, and who were to him the world. A man born to great wealth may, without injury to himself or his friends, do pretty nearly what he likes in regard to marriage, always presuming that the wife he selects be of his own rank. He need not marry for money, nor need he abstain from marriage because he can't support a wife without money. And the very poor man, who has no pretension to rank or standing, other than that which honesty may give him, can do the same. His wife's fortune will consist in the labour of her hands, and in her ability to assist him in his home. But between these there is a middle class of men, who, by reason of their education, are peculiarly susceptible to the charms of womanhood, but who literally cannot marry for love, because their earnings will do no more than support themselves. As to this special young man, it must be confessed that his earnings should have done much

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more than that; but not the less did he find himself in a position in which marriage with a penniless girl seemed to threaten him and her with ruin. All his friends told Frank Greystock that he would be ruined were he to marry Lucy Morris; and his friends were people supposed to be very good and wise. The dean, and the dean's wife, his father and mother, were very clear that it would be so. Old Lady Linlithgow had spoken of such a marriage as quite out of the question. The Bishop of Bobsborough, when it was mentioned in his hearing, had declared that such a marriage would be a thousand pities. And even dear old Lady Fawn, though she wished it for Lucy's sake, had many times prophesied that such a thing was quite impossible. When the rumour of the marriage reached Lady Glencora, Lady Glencora told her friend, Madame Max Goesler, that that young man was going to blow his brains out. To her thinking the two actions were equivalent. It is only when we read of such men that we feel that truth to his sweetheart is the first duty of man. I am afraid that it is not the advice which we give to our sons.

But it was the advice which Frank Greystock had most persistently given to himself since he had first known Lucy Morris. Doubtless he had vacillated, but on the balance of his convictions as to his own future conduct he had been much nobler than his friends. He had never hesitated for a moment as to the value of Lucy Morris. She was not beautiful. She had no wonderful gifts of nature. There was nothing of a goddess about her. She was absolutely penniless. She had never been what the world calls well-dressed. And yet she had been everything to him. There had

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grown up a sympathy between them quite as strong on his part as on hers, and he had acknowledged it to himself. He had never doubted his own love, and when he had been most near to convincing himself that in his peculiar position he ought to marry his rich cousin because of her wealth, then, at those moments, he had most strongly felt that to have Lucy Morris close to him was the greatest charm in existence. Hitherto his cousin's money, joined to flatteries and caresses — which if a young man can resist he is almost more than a young man — had tempted him; but he had combated the temptation. On one memorable evening his love for Lucy had tempted him. To that temptation he had yielded, and the letter by which he became engaged to her had been written. He had never meant to evade it; had always told himself that it should not be evaded; but gradually days had been added to days, and months to months, and he had allowed her to languish without seeing him, and almost without hearing from him.

She too had heard from all sides that she was deserted by him, and she had written to him to give him back his troth; but she had not sent her letters. She did not doubt that the thing was over — she hardly doubted; and yet she would not send any letter. Perhaps it would be better that the matter should be allowed to drop without any letter-writing. She would never reproach him, though she would ever think him to be a traitor. Would not she have starved herself for him? Could she so have served him? And yet he could bear for her sake no touch of delay in his prosperity! Would she not have been content to wait, and always to wait, so that he, with some word of love,

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would have told her that he waited also? But he would not only desert her, but would give himself to that false, infamous woman, who was so wholly unfitted to be his wife. For Lucy, though to herself she would call him a traitor, and would think him to be a traitor, still regarded him as the best of mankind; as one who, in marrying such a one as Lizzie Eustace, would destroy all his excellence, as a man might mar his strength and beauty by falling into a pit. For Lizzie Eustace Lucy Morris had now no forgiveness. Lucy had almost forgotten Lizzie's lies, and her proferred bribe, and all her meanness, when she made that visit to Hertford street. Then when Lizzie claimed this man as her lover, a full remembrance of all the woman's iniquities came back on Lucy's mind. The statement that Lizzie then made Lucy did believe. She did think that Frank, her Frank, the man whom she worshipped, was to take this harpy to his bosom as his wife; and if it were to be so, was it not better that she should be so told? But from that moment poor Lizzie's sins were ranker to Lucy Morris than even to Mr. Camperdown or Mrs. Hittaway. She could not refrain from saying a word even to old Lady Linlithgow. The countess had called her niece a little liar.

"Liar!" said Lucy, "I do not think Satan himself can lie as she does."

"Heighty-tighty," said the countess. "I suppose, then, there's to be a match between Lady Satan and her cousin Frank?"

"They can do as they like about that," said Lucy, walking out of the room.

Then came the paragraph in the fashionable evening newspaper; after that, the report of the examination

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before the magistrate; and then certain information that Lady Eustace was about to proceed to Scotland together with her cousin, Mr. Greystock, the Member for Bobsborough. "It is a large income," said the countess, "but, upon my word, she's dear at the money." Lucy did not speak, but she bit her lip till the blood ran into her mouth. She was going down to Fawn Court almost immediately, to stay there with her old friends till she should be able to find some permanent home for herself. Once, and once only, would she endure discussion, and then the matter should be banished forever from her tongue.

Early on the appointed morning Frank Greystock, with a couple of cabs, was at Mrs. Carbuncle's door in Hertford street. Lizzie had agreed to start by a very early train — at eight A. M. — so that she might get through to Portray in one day. It had been thought expedient, both by herself and by her cousin, that for the present there should be no more sleeping at the Carlisle hotel. The robbery was probably still talked about in that establishment; and the report of the proceedings at the police-court had no doubt travelled as far north as the border city. It was to be a long day, and could hardly be other than sad. Lizzie, understanding this, feeling that though she had been in a great measure triumphant over her difficulties before the magistrate, she ought still to consider herself, for a short while, as being under a cloud, crept down into the cab and seated herself beside her cousin, almost without a word. She was again dressed in black, and again wore the thick veil. Her maid, with the luggage, followed them, and they were driven to Euston Square almost without a word. On this occasion no tall foot-

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man accompanied them. "Oh, Frank; dear Frank," she had said, and that was all. He had been active about the luggage and useful in giving orders; but beyond his directions and inquiries as to the journey he spoke not a word. Had she breakfasted? Would she have a cup of tea at the station? Should he take any luncheon for her? At every question she only looked into his face and shook her head. All thoughts as to creature comforts were over with her now forever. Tranquillity, a little poetry, and her darling boy, were all that she needed for the short remainder of her sojourn upon earth. These were the sentiments which she intended to convey when she shook her head and looked up into his eyes. The world was over for her. She had had her day of pleasure, and found how vain it was. Now she would devote herself to her child. "I shall see my boy again to-night," she said, as she took her seat in the carriage.

Such was the state of mind, or such, rather, the resolutions, with which she commenced her journey. Should he become bright, communicative, and pleasant, or even tenderly silent, or perhaps, now at length, affectionate and demonstrative, she no doubt might be able to change as he changed. He had been cousinly but gloomy at the police-court; in the same mood when he brought her home; and, as she saw with the first glance of her eye, in the same mood again when she met him in the hall this morning. Of course she must play his tunes. Is it not the fate of women to play the tunes which men dictate, except in some rare case in which the woman can make herself the dictator? Lizzie loved to be a dictator; but at the present moment she knew that circumstances were against her.

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She watched him — so closely. At first he slept a good deal. He was never in bed very early, and on this morning had been up at six. At Rugby he got out and ate what he said was his breakfast. Would she not have a cup of tea? Again she shook her head and smiled. She smiled as some women smile when you offer them a third glass of champagne. "You are joking with me, I know. You cannot think that I would take it." This was the meaning of Lizzie's smile. He went into the refreshment-room, growled at the heat of the tea and the abominable nastiness of the food provided, and then, after the allotted five minutes, took himself to a smoking-carriage. He did not rejoin his cousin till they were at Crewe. When he went back to his old seat, she only smiled again. He asked her whether she had slept, and again she shook her head. She had been repeating to herself the address to Ianthe's soul, and her whole being was pervaded with poetry.

It was absolutely necessary, as he thought, that she should eat something, and he insisted that she should dine upon the road, somewhere. He, of course, was not aware that she had been nibbling biscuits and chocolate while he had been smoking, and had had recourse even to the comfort of a sherry flask which she carried in her dressing-bag. When he talked of dinner she did more than smile and refuse. She expostulated. For she well knew that the twenty minutes for dinner were allowed at the Carlisle station; and even if there had been no chocolate and no sherry, she would have endured on, even up to absolute inanition, rather than step out upon this well-remembered platform. "You must eat, or you 'll be starved," he said. "I 'll fetch you something." So he bribed a special

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waiter, and she was supplied with cold chicken and more sherry. After this Frank smoked again, and did not reappear till they had reached Dumfries.

Hitherto there had been no tenderness — nothing but the coldest cousinship. He clearly meant her to understand that he had submitted to the task of accompanying her back to Portray Castle as a duty, but that he had nothing to say to one who had so misbehaved herself. This was very irritating. She could have taken herself home to Portray without his company, and have made the journey more endurable without him than with him, if this were to be his conduct throughout. They had had the carriage to themselves all the way from Crewe to Carlisle, and he had hardly spoken a word to her. If he would have rated her soundly for her wickednesses, she could have made something of that. She could have thrown herself on her knees, and implored his pardon; or, if hard pressed, have suggested the propriety of throwing herself out of the carriage-window. She could have brought him round if he would only have talked to her, but there is no doing anything with a silent man. He was not her master. He had no power over her. She was the lady of Portray, and he could not interfere with her. If he intended to be sullen with her to the end, and to show his contempt for her, she would turn against him. "The worm will turn," she said to herself. And yet she did not think herself a worm.

A few stations beyond Dumfries they were again alone. It was now quite dark, and they had already been travelling over ten hours. They would not reach their own station till eight, and then again there would be the journey to Portray. At last he spoke to her.

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"Are you tired, Lizzie?"

"Oh, so tired!"

"You have slept, I think?"

"No, not once; not a wink. You have slept." This she said in a tone of reproach.

"Indeed I have."

"I have endeavoured to read, but one cannot command one's mind at all times. Oh, I am so weary. Is it much farther? I have lost all reckoning as to time and place."

"We change at the next station but one. It will soon be over now. Will you have a glass of sherry? I have some in my flask." Again she shook head. "It is a long way down to Portray, I must own."

"Oh, I am so sorry that I have given you the trouble to accompany me."

"I was not thinking of myself. I don't mind it. It was better that you should have somebody with you — just for this journey."

"I don't know why this journey should be different from any other," said Lizzie crossly. She had not done anything that made it necessary that she should be taken care of — like a naughty girl.

"I 'll see you to the end of it now, anyway."

"And you 'll stay a few days with me, Frank? You won't go away at once? Say you 'll stay a week. Dear, dear Frank; say you 'll stay a week. I know that the House does n't meet for ever so long. Oh, Frank, I do so wish you 'd be more like yourself." There was no reason why she should not make one other effort, and as she made it every sign of fatigue passed away from her.

"I 'll stay over to-morrow certainly," he replied.

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"Only one day!"

"Days with me mean money, Lizzie, and money is a thing which is at present very necessary to me."

"I hate money."

"That's very well for you because you have plenty of it."

"I hate money. It is the only thing that one has that one cannot give to those one loves. I could give you anything else — though it cost a thousand pounds."

"Pray don't. Most people like presents, but they only bore me."

"Because you are so indifferent, Frank; so cold. Do you remember giving me a little ring?"

"Very well indeed. It cost eight and sixpence."

"I never thought what it cost; but there it is." This she said drawing off her glove and showing him her finger. "And when I am dead there it will be. You say you want money, Frank. May I not give it you? Are not we brother and sister?"

"My dear Lizzie, you say you hate money. Don't talk about it."

"It is you that talk about it. I only talk about it because I want to give it you; yes, all that I have. When I first knew what was the real meaning of my husband's will, my only thought was to be of assistance to you."

In real truth Frank was becoming very sick of her. It seemed to him now to have been almost impossible that he should ever soberly have thought of making her his wife. The charm was all gone, and even her prettiness had in his eyes lost its value. He looked at her, asking himself whether in truth she was pretty. She

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had been travelling all day, and perhaps the scrutiny was not fair. But he thought that even after the longest day's journey Lucy would not have been soiled, haggard, dishevelled, and unclean, as was this woman.

Travellers again entered the carriage, and they went on with a crowd of persons till they reached the platform at which they changed the carriage for Troon. Then they were again alone, for a few minutes, and Lizzie with infinite courage determined that she would make her last attempt. "Frank," she said, "you know what it is that I mean. You cannot feel that I am ungenerous. You have made me love you. Will you have all that I have to give?" She was leaning over close to him, and he was observing that her long lock of hair was out of curl and untidy, a thing that ought not to have been during such a journey as this.

"Do you not know," he said, "that I am engaged to marry Lucy Morris?"

"No; I do not know it."

"I have told you so more than once."

"You cannot afford to marry her."

"Then I shall do it without affording."

Lizzie was about to speak, had already pronounced her rival's name, in that tone of contempt which she so well knew how to use, when he stopped her. "Do not say anything against her, Lizzie, in my hearing, for I will not bear it. It would force me to leave you at the Troon station, and I had better see you now to the end of the journey." Lizzie flung herself back into the corner of her carriage, and did not utter another word till she reached Portray Castle. He handed her out of the railway carriage and into her own vehicle which was waiting for them, attended to the maid, and

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got the luggage; but still she did not speak. It would be better that she should quarrel with him. That little snake Lucy would of course now tell him of the meeting between them in Hertford street, after which anything but quarrelling would be impossible. What a fool the man must be, what an idiot, what a soft-hearted, mean-spirited fellow! Lucy, by her sly, quiet little stratagems, had got him once to speak the word, and now he had not courage enough to go back from it! He had less strength of will even than Lord Fawn! What she offered to him would be the making of him. With his position, his seat in Parliament, such a country house as Portray Castle, and the income which she would give him, there was nothing that he might not reach! And he was so infirm of purpose that though he had hankered after it all he would not open his hand to take it, because he was afraid of such a little thing as Lucy Morris! It was thus that she thought of him as she leaned back in the carriage without speaking. In giving her all that is due to her we must acknowledge that she had less feeling of the injury done to her charms as a woman than might have been expected. That she hated Lucy was a matter of course; and equally so that she should be very angry with Frank Greystock; but the anger arose from general disappointment rather than from any sense of her own despised beauty. "Ah, now I shall see my child," she said, as the carriage stopped at the castle gate.

When Frank Greystock went to his supper Miss Macnulty brought to him his cousin's compliments with a message saying that she was too weary to see him again that night. The message had been intended to be curt and uncourteous, but Miss Macnulty had

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softened it, so that no harm was done. "She must be very weary," said Frank.

"I supposed though that nothing would ever really tire Lady Eustace," said Miss Macnulty. "When she is excited nothing will tire her. Perhaps the journey has been dull."

"Exceedingly dull!" said Frank, as he helped himself to the collops which the Portray cook had prepared for his supper.

Miss Macnulty was very attentive to him and had many questions to ask. About the necklace she hardly dared to speak, merely observing how sad it was that all those precious diamonds should have been lost forever. "Very sad indeed," said Frank with his mouth full. She then went on to the marriage — the marriage that was no marriage. Was not that very dreadful? Was it true that Miss Roanoke was really — out of her mind? Frank acknowledged that it was dreadful, but thought that the marriage had it been completed would have been more so. As for the young lady he only knew that she had been taken somewhere out of the way. Sir Griffin, he had been told, had gone to Japan.

"To Japan!" said Miss Macnulty, really interested. Had Sir Griffin gone no farther than Boulogne her pleasure in the news would certainly have been much less. Then she asked some single question about Lord George, and from that came to the real marrow of her anxiety. Had Mr. Greystock lately seen the — the Rev. Mr. Emilius? Frank had not seen the clergyman, and could only say of him that had Lucinda Roanoke and Sir Griffin Tewett been made one, the knot would have been tied by Mr. Emilius.

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"Would it indeed? Did you not think Mr. Emilius very clever when you met him down here?"

"I don't doubt but what he is a sharp sort of fellow."

"Oh, Mr. Greystock, I don't think that that's the word for him at all. He did promise me when he was here that he would write to me occasionally, but I suppose that the increasing duties of his position have rendered that impossible." Frank, who had no idea of the extent of the preacher's ambition, assured Miss Macnulty that among his multifarious clerical labours it was out of the question that Mr. Emilius should find time to write letters.

Frank had consented to stay one day at Portray, and did not now like to run away without again seeing his cousin. Though much tempted to go at once, he did stay the day, and had an opportunity of speaking a few words to Mr. Gowran. Mr. Gowran was very gracious, but said nothing of his journey up to London. He asked various questions concerning her "leddyship's" appearance at the police-court, as to which tidings had already reached Ayrshire, and pretended to be greatly shocked at the loss of the diamonds.

"When they talk o' ten thoosand poond that's a lee nae doobt?" asked Andy.

"No lie at all, I believe," said Greystock.

"And her leddyship wad tak' aboot wi' her ten thoosand poond in a box?" Andy still showed much doubt by the angry glance of his eye and the close compression of his lips and the great severity of his demeanour as he asked the question.

"I know nothing about diamonds myself, but that is what they say they were worth."

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"Her leddyship her ain sell seems nae to ha' been in ain story aboot the box, Muster Greystock?" But Frank could not stand to be cross-questioned on this delicate matter, and walked off, saying that as the thieves had not yet been tried for the robbery, the less said about it the better.

At four o'clock on that afternoon he had not seen Lizzie, and then he received a message from her to the effect that she was still so unwell from the fatigue of her journey that she could bear no one with her but her child. She hoped that her cousin was quite comfortable, and that she might be able to see him after breakfast on the following day. But Frank was determined to leave Portray very early on the following day, and therefore wrote a note to his cousin. He begged that she would not disturb herself, that he would leave the castle the next morning before she could be up, and that he had only further to remind her that she must come up to London at once as soon as she should be summoned for the trial of Mr. Benjamin and his comrade. It had seemed to Frank that she had almost concluded that her labours connected with that disagreeable matter were at end.

"The examination may be long, and I will attend you if you wish it," said her cousin. Upon receiving this she thought it expedient to come down to him, and there was an interview for about a quarter of an hour in her own little sitting-room, looking out upon the sea. She had formed a project, and at once suggested it to him. If she found herself ill when the day of the trial came, could they make her go up and give her evidence? Frank told her that they could and that they would. She was very clever about it.

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"They could n't go back to what I said at Carlisle, you know; because they already have made me tell all that myself." As she had been called upon to criminate herself she could not now be tried for the crime. Frank, however, would not listen to this, and told her that she must come. "Very well, Frank. I know you like to have your own way. You always did. And you think so little of my feelings? I shall make inquiry and if I must why I suppose I must."

"You 'd better make up your mind to come."

"Very well. And now, Frank, as I am so very tired, if you please, I 'll say good-by to you. I am very much obliged to you for coming with me. Good-by." And so they parted.

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CHAPTER LXXVII.

THE STORY OF LUCY MORRIS IS CONCLUDED.

On the day appointed, Lucy Morris went back from the house of the old countess to Fawn Court. "My dear," said Lady Linlithgow, "I am sorry that you are going. Perhaps you 'll think I have n't been very kind to you, but I never am kind. People have always been hard to me, and I 'm hard. But I do like you."

"I 'm glad you like me, as we have lived together so long."

"You may go on staying here, if you choose, and I 'll try to make it better."

"It has n't been bad at all, only that there 's nothing particular to do. But I must go. I shall get another place as a governess somewhere, and that will suit me best."

"Because of the money, you mean."

"Well — that in part."

"I mean to pay you something," said the countess, opening her pocket-book, and fumbling for two bank-notes which she had deposited there.

"Oh, dear, no. I have n't earned anything."

"I always gave Macnulty something, and she was not near so nice as you." And then the countess produced two ten-pound notes. But Lucy would have none of her money, and when she was pressed, became proud and almost indignant in her denial. She had

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earned nothing, and she would take nothing; and it was in vain that the old lady spread the clean bits of paper before her. "And so you 'll go and be a governess again; will you?"

"When I can get a place."

"I 'll tell you what, my dear. If I were Frank Greystock, I 'd stick to my bargain." Lucy at once fell a-crying, but she smiled upon the old woman through her tears. "Of course he 's going to marry that little limb of the devil."

"Oh, Lady Linlithgow, if you can, prevent that!"

"How am I to prevent it, my dear? I 've nothing to say to either of them."

"It isn't for myself I 'm speaking. If I can't — if I can't — can't have things go as I thought they would by myself, I will never ask any one to help me. It is not that I mean. I have given all that up."

"You have given it up?"

"Yes; I have. But nevertheless I think of him. She is bad, and he will never be happy if he marries her. When he asked me to be his wife, he was mistaken as to what would be good for him. He ought not to have made such a mistake. For my sake he ought not."

"That 's quite true, my dear."

"But I do not wish him to be unhappy all his life. He is not bad, but she is very bad. I would not for worlds that anybody should tell him that he owed me anything; but if he could be saved from her, oh, I should be so glad."

"You won't have my money, then?"

"No, Lady Linlithgow."

"You 'd better. It is honestly your own."

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"I will not take it, thank you."

"Then I may as well put it up again." And the countess replaced the notes in her pocket-book. When this conversation took place, Frank Greystock was travelling back alone from Portray to London. On the same day the Fawn carriage came to fetch Lucy away. As Lucy was in peculiar distress, Lady Fawn would not allow her to come by any other conveyance. She did not exactly think that the carriage would console her poor favourite; but she did it as she would have ordered something specially nice to eat for any one who had broken his leg. Her soft heart had compassion for misery, though she would sometimes show her sympathy by strange expressions. Lady Linlithgow was almost angry about the carriage. "How many carriages and how many horses does Lady Fawn keep?" she asked.

"One carriage and two horses."

"She's very fond of sending them up into the streets of London, I think." Lucy said nothing more, knowing that it would be impossible to soften the heart of this dowager in regard to the other. But she kissed the old woman at parting, and then was taken down to Richmond in state.

She had made up her mind to have one discussion with Lady Fawn about her engagement, the engagement which was no longer an engagement, and then to have done with it. She would ask Lady Fawn to ask the girls never to mention Mr. Greystock's name in her hearing. Lady Fawn had also made up her mind to the same effect. She felt that the subject should be mentioned once, and once only. Of course Lucy must have another place, but there need be no hurry

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about that. She fully recognised her young friend's feeling of independence, and was herself aware that she would be wrong to offer to the girl a permanent home among her own daughters, and therefore she could not abandon the idea of a future place; but Lucy would, of course, remain till a situation should be found for her that would be in every sense unexceptionable. There need, however, be no haste, and, in the mean time, the few words about Frank Greystock must be spoken. They need not, however, be spoken quite immediately. Let there be smiles, and joy, and a merry ring of laughter on this the first day of the return of their old friend. As Lucy had the same feelings on that afternoon they did talk pleasantly and were merry. The girls asked questions about the vulturess, as they had heard her called by Lizzie Eustace, and laughed at Lucy, to her face, when she swore that, after a fashion, she liked the old woman.

"You 'd like anybody, then," said Nina.

"Indeed I don't," said Lucy, thinking at once of Lizzie Eustace.

Lady Fawn planned out the next day with great precision. After breakfast, Lucy and the girls were to spend the morning in the old school-room, so that there might be a general explanation as to the doings of the last six months. They were to dine at three, and after dinner there should be the discussion. "Will you come up to my room at four o'clock, my dear?" said Lady Fawn, patting Lucy's shoulder, in the breakfast-parlour. Lucy knew well why her presence was required. Of course she would come. It would be wise to get it over, and have done with it.

At noon Lady Fawn, with her three eldest daughters,

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went out in the carriage, and Lucy was busy among the others with books and maps and sheets of scribbled music. Nothing was done on that day in the way of instruction; but there was much of half-jocose acknowledgment of past idleness, and a profusion of resolutions of future diligence. One or two of the girls were going to commence a course of reading that would have broken the back of any professor, and suggestions were made as to very rigid rules as to the talking of French and German. "But as we can't talk German," said Nina, "we should simply be dumb."

"You 'd talk High-Dutch, Nina, sooner than submit to that," said one of the sisters.

The conclave was still sitting in full deliberation, when one of the maids entered the room with a very long face. There was a gentleman in the drawing-room asking for Miss Morris! Lucy, who at the moment was standing at a table on which were spread an infinity of books, became at once as white as a sheet. Her fast friend, Lydia Fawn, who was standing by her, immediately took hold of her hand quite tightly. The face of the maid was fit for a funeral. She knew that Miss Morris had had a "follower," that the follower had come, and that then Miss Morris had gone away. Miss Morris had been allowed to come back; and now, on the very first day, just when my lady's back was turned, here was the follower again! Before she had come up with her message, there had been an unanimous expression of opinion in the kitchen that the fat would all be in the fire. Lucy was as white as marble, and felt such a sudden shock at her heart, that she could not speak. And yet she never doubted for a moment that Frank Greystock was the

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man. And with what purpose but one could he have come there? She had on the old, old frock in which, before her visit to Lady Linlithgow, she used to pass the morning, amid her labours with the girls, a pale, gray, well-worn frock, to which must have been imparted some attraction from the milliner's art, because everybody liked it so well, but which she had put on this very morning as a testimony, to all the world around her, that she had abandoned the idea of being anything except a governess. Lady Fawn had understood the frock well. "Here is the dear little old woman just the same as ever," Lydia had said, embracing her.

"She looks as if she'd gone to bed before the winter, and had a long sleep, like a dormouse," said Cecilia. Lucy had liked it all, and thoroughly appreciated the loving-kindness; but she had known what it all meant. She had left them as the engaged bride of Mr. Greystock, the member for Bobsborough; and now she had come back as Lucy Morris, the governess, again.

"Just the same as ever," Lucy had said, with the sweetest smile. They all understood that in so saying she renounced her lover.

And now there stood the maid, inside the room, who, having announced that there was a gentleman asking for Miss Morris, was waiting for an answer. Was the follower to be sent about his business, with a flea in his ear, having come, slyly, craftily, and wickedly, in Lady Fawn's absence; or would Miss Morris brazen it out, and go and see him?

"Who is the gentleman?" asked Diana, who was the eldest of the Fawn girls, present.

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"It 's he as used to come after Miss Morris before," said the maid.

"It is Mr. Greystock," said Lucy, recovering herself with an effort. "I had better go down to him. Will you tell him, Mary, that I 'll be with him almost immediately?"

"You ought to have put on the other frock, after all," said Nina, whispering into her ear.

"He has not lost much time in coming to see you," said Lydia.

"I suppose it was all because he did n't like Lady Linlithgow," said Cecilia. Lucy had not a word to say. She stood for a minute among them, trying to think, and then she slowly left the room.

She would not condescend to alter her dress by the aid of a single pin, nor by the adjustment of a ribbon. It might well be that, after the mingled work and play of the morning, her hair should not be smooth; but she was too proud to look at her hair. The man whom she had loved, who had loved her but had neglected her, was in the house. He would surely not have followed her thither did he not intend to make reparation for his neglect. But she would use no art with him; nor would she make any entreaty. It might be that, after all, he had the courage to come and tell her, in a manly, straightforward way, that the thing must be all over, that he had made a mistake, and would beg her pardon. If it were so, there should be no word of reproach. She would be quite quiet with him; but there should be no word of reproach. But if —— in that other case, she could not be sure of her behaviour; but she knew well that he would not have to ask long for forgiveness. As for her dress, he

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had chosen to love her in that frock before, and she did not think that he would pay much attention to her dress on the present occasion.

She opened the door very quietly and very slowly, intending to approach him in the same way; but in a moment, before she could remember that she was in the room, he had seized her in his arms, and was showering kisses upon her forehead, her eyes, and her lips. When she thought of it afterwards, she could not call to mind a single word that he had spoken before he held her in his embrace. It was she, surely, who had spoken first, when she begged to be released from his pressure. But she well remembered the first words that struck her ear. "Dearest Lucy, will you forgive me?" She could only answer them, through her tears, by taking up his hand and kissing it.

When Lady Fawn came back with the carriage, she herself saw the figures of two persons walking very close together, in the shrubberies.

"Is that Lucy?" she asked.

"Yes;" said Augusta, with a tone of horror. "Indeed it is; and — Mr. Greystock."

Lady Fawn was neither shocked nor displeased; nor was she disappointed; but a certain faint feeling of being ill-used by circumstances came over her. "Dear me; the very first day!" she said.

"It 's because he would n't go to Lady Linlithgow's," said Amelia. "He has only waited, mamma."

"But the very first day!" exclaimed Lady Fawn. "I hope Lucy will be happy; that 's all."

There was a great meeting of all the Fawns, as soon as Lady Fawn and the eldest girls were in the house. Mr. Greystock had been walking about the grounds

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with Lucy for the last hour and a half. Lucy had come in once to beg that Lady Fawn might be told directly she came in. "She said you were to send for her, mamma," said Lydia.

"But it 's dinner-time, my dear. What are we to do with Mr. Greystock?"

"Ask him to lunch, of course," said Amelia.

"I suppose it 's all right," said Lady Fawn.

"I 'm quite sure it 's all right," said Nina.

"What did she say to you, Lydia?" asked the mother.

"She was as happy as ever she could be," said Lydia. "There 's no doubt about it 's being all right, mamma. She looked just as she did when she got the letter from him before."

"I hope she managed to change her frock," said Augusta.

"She did n't then," said Cecilia.

"I don't suppose he cares one half-penny about her frock," said Nina. "I should never think about a man's coat if I was in love."

"Nina, you should n't talk in that way," said Augusta. Whereupon Nina made a face behind one of her sister's backs. Poor Augusta was never allowed to be a prophetess among them.

The consultation was ended by a decision in accordance with which Nina went as an ambassador to the lovers. Lady Fawn sent her compliments to Mr. Greystock, and hoped he would come in to lunch. Lucy must come in to dinner, because dinner was ready.

"And mamma wants to see you just for a minute," added Nina, in a pretended whisper.

"Oh, Nina, you darling girl!" said Lucy, kissing her young friend in an ecstasy of joy.

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"It 's all right?" asked Nina in a whisper which was really intended for privacy. Lucy did not answer the question otherwise than by another kiss.

Frank Greystock was, of course, obliged to take his seat at the table, and was entertained with a profusion of civility. Everybody knew that he had behaved badly to Lucy — everybody, except Lucy herself, who, from this time forward, altogether forgot that she had for some time looked upon him as a traitor, and had made up her mind that she had been deceived and ill-used. All the Fawns had spoken of him, in Lucy's absence, in the hardest terms of reproach, and declared that he was not fit to be spoken to by any decent person. Lady Fawn had known from the first that such a one as he was not to be trusted. Augusta had never liked him. Amelia had feared that poor Lucy Morris had been unwise, and too ambitious. Georgina had seen that, of course, it would never do. Diana had sworn that it was a great shame. Lydia was sure that Lucy was a great deal too good for him. Cecilia had wondered where he would go to; a form of anathema which had brought down a rebuke from her mother. And Nina had always hated him like poison. But now nothing was too good for him. An unmarried man who is willing to sacrifice himself is, in feminine eyes, always worthy of ribbons and a chaplet. Among all these Fawns there was as little selfishness as can be found, even among women. The lover was not the lover of one of themselves, but of their governess. And yet, though he desired neither to eat nor drink at that hour, something special had been cooked for him, and a special bottle of wine had been brought out of the cellar. All his sins were forgiven him. No

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single question was asked as to his gross misconduct during the last six months. No pledge or guarantee was demanded for the future. There he was, in the guise of a declared lover, and the fatted calf was killed.

After this early dinner it was necessary that he should return to town, and Lucy obtained leave to walk with him to the station. To her thinking now, there was no sin to be forgiven. Everything was, and had been, just as it ought to be. Had any human being hinted that he had sinned, she would have defended him to the death. Something was said between them about Lizzie, but nothing that arose from jealousy. Not till many months had passed did she tell him of Lizzie's message to herself, and of her visit to Hertford street; but they spoke of the necklace, and poor Lucy shuddered as she was told the truth about those false oaths.

"I really do think that, after that, Lord Fawn is right," she said, looking round at her lover.

"Yes; but what he did, he did before that," said Frank.

"But are they not good and kind?" she said, pleading for her friends. "Was ever anybody so well treated as they have treated me? I'll tell you what, sir, you must n't quarrel with Lord Fawn any more. I won't allow it." Then she walked back from the station alone, almost bewildered by her own happiness.

That evening something like an explanation was demanded by Lady Fawn, but no explanation was forthcoming. When questions were asked about his silence, Lucy, half in joke and half in earnest, fired

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up and declared that everything had been as natural as possible. He could not have come to Lady Linlithgow's house. Lady Linlithgow would not receive him. No doubt she had been impatient, but then that had been her fault. Had he not come to her the very first day after her return to Richmond? When Augusta said something as to letters which might have been written, Lucy snubbed her. "Who says he did n't write. He did write. If I am contented, why should you complain?"

"Oh, I don't complain," said Augusta.

Then questions were asked as to the future; questions to which Lady Fawn had a right to demand an answer. What did Mr. Greystock propose to do now? Then Lucy broke down, sobbing, crying, triumphing, with mingled love and happiness. She was to go to the deanery. Frank had brought with him a little note to her from his mother, in which she was invited to make the deanery at Bobsborough her home for the present.

"And you are to go away just when you 've come?" asked Nina.

"Stay with us a month, my dear," said Lady Fawn, "just to let people know that we are friends, and after that the deanery will be the best home for you." And so it was arranged.

. . . . . .

It need only be further said, in completing the history of Lucy Morris as far as it can be completed in these pages, that she did go to the deanery, and that there she was received with all the affection which Mrs. Greystock could show to an adopted daughter. Her quarrel had never been with Lucy personally — but

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with the untoward fact that her son would not marry money. At the deanery she remained for fifteen happy months, and then became Mrs. Greystock, with a bevy of Fawn bridesmaids around her. As the personages of a chronicle such as this should all be made to operate backwards and forwards on each other from the beginning to the end, it would have been desirable that the chronicler should have been able to report that the ceremony was celebrated by Mr. Emilius; but as the wedding did not take place till the end of the summer, and as Mr. Emilius, at that time, never remained in town after the season was over, this was impossible; it was the Dean of Bobsborough, assisted by one of the minor canons, who performed the service.

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CHAPTER LXXVIII.

THE TRIAL.

HAVING told the tale of Lucy Morris to the end, the chronicler must now go back to the more important persons of this history. It was still early in April when Lizzie Eustace was taken down to Scotland by her cousin, and the trial of Mr. Benjamin and Mr. Smiler was fixed to take place at the Central Criminal Court about the middle of May. Early in May the attorneys for the prosecution applied to Greystock, asking him whether he would make arrangements for his cousin's appearance on the occasion, informing him that she had already been formally summoned. Whereupon he wrote to Lizzie, telling her what she had better do, in the kindest manner — as though there had been no cessation of their friendly intercourse; offering to go with her into court — and naming a hotel at which he would advise her to stay, during the very short time that she need remain in London. She answered this letter at once. She was sorry to say that she was much too ill to travel, or even to think of travelling. Such was her present condition that she doubted greatly whether she would ever again be able to leave the two rooms to which she was at present confined. All that remained to her in life was to watch her own blue waves from the casement of her dear husband's castle — that casement at

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which he had loved to sit — and to make herself happy in the smiles of her child. A few months would see the last of it all, and then, perhaps, they who had trampled her to death would feel some pang of remorse as they thought of her early fate. She had given her evidence once and had told all the truth — though she was now aware that she need not have done so, as she had been defrauded of a vast amount of property through the gross negligence of the police. She was advised now by persons who seemed really to understand the law, that she could recover the value of the diamonds which her dear, dear husband had given her, from the freeholders of the parish in which the robbery had taken place. She feared that her health did not admit of the necessary exertion. Were it otherwise she would leave no stone unturned to recover the value of her property — not on account of its value, but because she had been so ill-treated by Mr. Camperdown and the police. Then she added a postscript to say that it was quite out of the question that she should take any journey for the next six months.

The reader need hardly be told that Greystock did not believe a word of what she said. He felt sure that she was not ill. There was an energy in the letter hardly compatible with illness. But he could not make her come. He certainly did not intend to go down again to Scotland to fetch her; and even had he done so he could not have forced her to accompany him. He could only go to the attorneys concerned, and read to them so much of the letter as he thought fit to communicate to them.

"That won't do at all," said an old gentleman at

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the head of the firm. "She has been very leniently treated, and she must come."

"You must manage it, then," said Frank.

"I hope she won't give us trouble, because if she does we must expose her," said the second member.

"She has not even sent a medical certificate," said the tyro of the firm, who was not quite so sharp as he will probably become when he has been a member of it for ten or twelve years. You should never ask the ostler whether he greases his oats. In this case Frank Greystock was not exactly in the position of the ostler; but he did inform his cousin by letter that she would lay herself open to all manner of pains and penalties if she disobeyed such a summons as she had received, unless she did so by a very strong medical advice, backed by a medical certificate.

Lizzie, when she received this, had two strings to her bow. A writer from Ayr had told her that the summons sent to her was not worth the paper on which it was printed in regard to a resident in Scotland; and she had also got a doctor from the neighbourhood who was satisfied that she was far too ill to travel up to London. Pulmonary debilitation was the complaint from which she was suffering, which, with depressed vitality in all the organs, and undue languor in all the bodily functions, would be enough to bring her to a speedy end if she so much as thought of making a journey up to London. A certificate to this effect was got in triplicate. One copy she sent to the attorneys, one to Frank, and one she kept herself.

The matter was very pressing indeed. It was considered that the trial could not be postponed till the next sitting at the Criminal Court, because certain

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witnesses in respect to the diamonds had been procured from Hamburgh and Vienna, at a very great cost; they were actually on their way to London when Lizzie's second letter was received. Mr. Camperdown had resolved to have the diamonds still, with a hope that they might be restored to the keeping of Messrs. Garnett, there to lie hidden and unused, at any rate, for the next twenty years. The diamonds had been traced first to Hamburgh and then to Vienna; and it was to be proved that they were now adorning the bosom of a certain enormously rich Russian princess. From the grasp of the Russian princess it was found impossible to rescue them; but the witnesses who, as it was hoped, might have aided Mr. Camperdown in his efforts, were to be examined at the trial.

A confidential clerk was sent down to Portray, but the confidential clerk altogether failed in making his way into Lizzie's presence. Word was brought to him that nothing but force could take Lady Eustace from her bedchamber; and that force used to that effect might take her out dead, but certainly not alive. He made inquiry, however, about the doctor, and found that he certainly was a doctor. If a doctor will certify that a lady is dying, what can any judge do, or any jury? There are certain statements which, though they are false as hell, must be treated as though they were true as gospel. The clerk reported when he got back to London, that to his belief Lady Eustace was enjoying an excellent state of health; but that he was perfectly certain that she would not appear as a witness at the trial.

The anger felt by many persons as to Lizzie's fraudulent obstinacy, was intense. Mr. Camperdown thought

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that she ought to be dragged up to London by cart ropes. The attorneys engaged for the prosecution were almost beside themselves. They did send down a doctor of their own, but Lizzie would not see the doctor — would not see the doctor though threats of most frightful consequences were conveyed to her. She would be exposed, fined thousands of pounds, committed to jail for contempt of court, and prosecuted for perjury into the bargain. But she was firm. She wrote one scrap of a note to the doctor who came from London. "I shall not live to satisfy their rabid vengeance." Even Frank Greystock felt almost more annoyed than gratified that she should be able thus to escape. People who had heard of the inquiry before the magistrate, had postponed their excitement and interest on the occasion, because they knew that the day of the trial would be the great day; and when they heard that they were to be robbed of the pleasure of Lady Eustace's cross-examination, there arose almost a public feeling of wrath that justice should be thus outraged. The doctor who had given the certificate was vilified in the newspapers, and long articles were written as to the impotence of the law. But Lizzie was successful, and the trial went on without her.

It appeared that though her evidence was very desirable it was not absolutely essential, as, in consequence of her certified illness, the statement which she had made at the police-court could be brought up and used against the prisoners. All the facts of the robbery were, moreover, proved by Patience Crabstick and Billy Cann; and the transfer of the diamonds by Mr. Benjamin to the man who recut them at Ham-

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burgh, was also proved. Many other morsels of collateral evidence had also been picked up by the police, so that there was no possible doubt as to any detail of the affair in Hertford street. There was a rumour that Mr. Benjamin intended to plead guilty. He might, perhaps, have done so had it not been for the absence of Lady Eustace; but as that was thought to give him a possible chance of escape, he stood his ground.

Lizzie's absence was a great disappointment to the sight-seers of London; but nevertheless the court was crowded. It was understood that the learned sergeant who was retained on this occasion to defend Mr. Benjamin, and who was assisted by the acute gentleman who had appeared before the magistrate, would be rather severe upon Lady Eustace, even in her absence; and that he would ground his demand for an acquittal on the combined facts of her retention of the diamonds, her perjury, and of her obstinate refusal to come forward on the present occasion. As it was known that he could be very severe, many came to hear him, and they were not disappointed. The reader shall see a portion of his address to the jury, which we hope may have had some salutary effect on Lizzie as she read it in her retreat at Portray looking out upon her own blue waves.

"And now, gentlemen of the jury, let me recapitulate to you the history of this lady as far as it relates to the diamonds, as to which my client is now in jeopardy. You have heard on the testimony of Mr. Camperdown that they were not hers at all, that, at any rate, they were not supposed to be hers by those in whose hands was left the administration of her husband's estate, and that when they were first supposed to have been stolen

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at the inn at Carlisle, he had already commenced legal steps for the recovery of them from her clutches. A bill in Chancery had been filed because she had obstinately refused to allow them to pass out of her hands. It has been proved to you by Lord Fawn that though he was engaged to marry her he broke his engagement because he supposed her possession of these diamonds to be fraudulent and dishonest." This examination had been terrible to the unfortunate under-secretary; and had absolutely driven him away from the India board and from Parliament for a month. "It has been proved to you that when the diamonds were supposed to have vanished at Carlisle, she there committed perjury. That she did so she herself stated on oath in that evidence which she gave before the magistrate when my client was committed, and which has, as I maintain, improperly and illegally been used against my client at this trial." Here the judge looked over his spectacles and admonished the learned sergeant that his argument on that subject had already been heard, and the matter decided. "True, my lord; but my conviction of my duty to my client compels me to revert to it. Lady Eustace committed perjury at Carlisle, having the diamonds in her pocket at the very moment in which she swore that they had been stolen from her; and if justice had really been done in this case, gentlemen, it is Lady Eustace who should now be on her trial before you, and not my unfortunate client. Well, what is the next that we hear of it? It seems that she brought the diamonds up to London; but how long she kept them there nobody knows. It was, however, necessary to account for them. A robbery is got up between a young woman who seems to

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have been the confidential friend, rather than the maid, of Lady Eustace, and that other witness whom you have heard testifying against himself, and who is of all the informers that ever came into my hands, the most flippant, the most hardened, the least conscientious, and the least credible. That those two were engaged in a conspiracy I cannot doubt. That Lady Eustace was engaged with them I will not say; but I will ask you to consider whether such may not probably have been the case. At any rate she then perjures herself again. She gives a list of the articles stolen from her, and omits the diamonds. She either perjures herself a second time, or else the diamonds, in regard to which my client is in jeopardy, were not in the house at all, and could not then have been stolen. It may very probably have been so. Nothing more probable. Mr. Camperdown and the managers of the Eustace estate had gradually come to a belief that the Carlisle robbery was a hoax, and therefore another robbery is necessary to account for the diamonds. Another robbery is arranged, and this young and beautiful widow, as bold as brass, again goes before the magistrate and swears. Either the diamonds were not stolen or else she commits a second perjury.

"And now, gentlemen, she is not here. She is sick forsooth at her own castle in Scotland, and sends to us a medical certificate; but the gentlemen who are carrying on this prosecution know their witness, and don't believe a word of her sickness. Had she the feelings of woman in her bosom she ought indeed to be sick unto death. But they know her better and send down a doctor of their own. You have heard his evidence, and yet this wonderful lady is not before us. I say

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again that she ought to be here in that dock — in that dock in spite of her fortune, in that dock in spite of her title, in that dock in spite of her castle, her riches, her beauty, and her great relatives. A most wonderful woman, indeed, is the widow Eustace. It is she whom public opinion will convict as the guilty one in this marvellous mass of conspiracy and intrigue. In her absence, and after what she has done herself, can you convict any man either of stealing or of disposing of these diamonds?" The vigour, the attitude, and the indignant tone of the man were more even than his words; but, nevertheless, the jury found both Benjamin and Smiler guilty, and the judge sentenced them to penal servitude for fifteen years.

And this was the end of the Eustace diamonds, as far as anything was ever known of them in England. Mr. Camperdown altogether failed, even in his attempt to buy them back at something less than their value, and was ashamed himself to look at the figures, when he found how much money he had wasted for his clients in their pursuit. In discussing the matter afterwards with Mr. Dove, he excused himself, by asserting his inability to see so gross a robbery perpetrated by a little minx, under his very eyes, without interfering with the plunder.

"I knew what she was," he said, "from the moment of Sir Florian's unfortunate marriage. He had brought a little harpy into the family, and I was obliged to declare war against her." Mr. Dove seemed to be of opinion that the ultimate loss of the diamonds was, upon the whole, desirable as regarded the whole community.

"I should like to have had the case settled as to

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right of possession," he said, "because there were in it one or two points of interest. We none of us know, for instance, what a man can, or what a man cannot, give away by a mere word."

"No such word was ever spoken," said Mr. Camperdown in wrath.

"Such evidence as there is would have gone to show that it had been spoken. But the very existence of such property so to be disposed of, or so not to be disposed of, is in itself an evil. Then, we have had to fight for six months about a lot of stones hardly so useful as the flags in the street, and then they vanish from us, leaving us nothing to repay us for our labour." All of which Mr. Camperdown did not quite understand. Mr. Dove would be paid for his labour, as to which, however, Mr. Camperdown knew well that no human being was more indifferent than Mr. Dove.

There was much sorrow, too, among the police. They had no doubt succeeded in sending two scoundrels out of the social world, probably for life, and had succeeded in avoiding the reproach which a great robbery unaccounted for always entails upon them; but it was sad to them that the property should altogether have been lost; and sad also that they should have been constrained to allow Billy Cann to escape out of their hands. Perhaps the sadness may have been lessened to a certain degree in the breast of the great Mr. Gager, by the charms and graces of Patience Crabstick, to whom he kept his word by making her his wife. This fact, or rather the prospect of this fact, as it then was, had also come to the knowledge of the learned sergeant, and in his hands had served to

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add another interest to the trial. Mr. Gager, when examined on the subject, did not attempt to deny the impeachment, and expressed a strong opinion that, though Miss Crabstick had given way to temptation under the wiles of the Jew, she would make an honest and an excellent wife. In which expectation let us trust that he may not be deceived.

Amusement had, indeed, been expected from other sources which failed. Mrs. Carbuncle had been summoned, and Lord George; but both of them had left town before the summons could reach them. It was rumoured that Mrs. Carbuncle, with her niece, had gone to join her husband at New York. At any rate, she disappeared altogether from London, leaving behind her an amount of debts which showed how extremely liberal in their dealings the great tradesmen of London will occasionally be. There were milliners' bills which had been running for three years, and horse-dealers had given her credit year after year, though they had scarcely ever seen the colour of her money. One account, however, she had honestly settled. The hotel-keeper in Albemarle street had been paid, and all the tribute had been packed and carried off from the scene of the proposed wedding banquet. What became of Lord George for the next six months nobody ever knew; but he appeared at Melton in the following November, and I do not know that any one dared to ask him questions about the Eustace diamonds.

Of Lizzie, and her future career, something further must be said in the concluding chapters of this work. She has been our heroine, and we must see her through her immediate troubles before we can leave her; but it may be as well to mention here that, although many

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threats had been uttered against her, not only by Mr. Camperdown and the other attorneys, but even by the judge himself, no punishment at all was inflicted upon her in regard to her recusancy, nor was any attempt made to punish her. The affair was over, and men were glad to avoid the necessity of troubling themselves further with the business. It was said that a case would be got up with the view of proving that she had not been ill at all, and that the Scotch doctor would be subjected to the loss of his degree, or whatever privileges in the healing art belonged to him; but nothing was done, and Lizzie triumphed in her success.

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CHAPTER LXXIX.

ONCE MORE AT PORTRAY.

On the very day of the trial Mr. Emilius travelled from London to Kilmarnock. The trial took place on a Monday, so that he had at his command an entire week before he would be required to appear again in his church. He had watched the case against Benjamin and Smiler very closely, and had known beforehand, almost with accuracy, what witnesses would appear and what would not at the great coming event at the Old Bailey. When he first heard of Lady Eustace's illness he wrote to her a most affectionately pastoral letter, strongly adjuring her to think of her health before all things, and assuring her that in his opinion and in that of all his friends she was quite right not to come up to London. She wrote him a very short but very gracious answer, thanking him for his solicitude and explaining to him that her condition made it quite impossible that she should leave Portray. "I don't suppose anybody knows how ill I am; but it does not matter. When I am gone, they will know what they have done." Then Mr. Emilius resolved that he would go down to Scotland. Perhaps Lady Eustace was not as ill as she thought; but it might be that the trial and the hard things lately said of her, and her loneliness and the feeling that she needed protection, might, at such a moment as this, soften her heart. She should know at

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least that one tender friend did not desert her because of the evil things which men said of her.

He went to Kilmarnock, thinking it better to make his approaches by degrees. Were he to present himself at once at the castle and be refused admittance, he would hardly know how to repeat his application or to force himself upon her presence. From Kilmarnock he wrote to her, saying that business connected with his ministrations during the coming autumn had brought him into her beautiful neighbourhood, and that he could not leave it without paying his respects to her in person. With her permission he would call upon her on the Thursday at about noon. He trusted that the state of her health would not prevent her from seeing him, and reminded her that a clergyman was often as welcome a visitor at the bedside of the invalid, as the doctor or the nurse. He gave her no address, as he rather wished to hinder her from answering him, but at the appointed hour he knocked at the castle door.

Need it be said that Lizzie's state of health was not such as to preclude her from seeing so intimate a friend as Mr. Emilius. That she was right to avoid by any effort the castigation which was to have fallen upon her from the tongue of the learned sergeant, the reader who is not straight-laced will be disposed to admit. A lone woman, very young, and delicately organised! How could she have stood up against such treatment as was in store for her? And is it not the case that false pretexts against public demands are always held to be justifiable by the female mind? What lady will ever scruple to avoid her taxes? What woman ever understood her duty to the State? And this duty which was required of her was so terrible that it might

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well have reduced to falsehood a stouter heart than her own. It can hardly be reckoned among Lizzie's great sins that she did not make that journey up to London. An appearance of sickness she did maintain, even with her own domestics. To do as much as that was due even to the doctor whom she had cajoled out of the certificate, and who was afterward frightened into maintaining it. But Mr. Emilius was her clergyman — her own clergyman, as she took care to say to her maid — her own clergyman, who had come all the way from London to be present with her in her sickness; and of course she would see him.

Lizzie did not think much of the coming autumnal ministration at Kilmarnock. She knew very well why Mr. Emilius had undertaken the expense of a journey into Scotland in the middle of the London season. She had been maimed fearfully in her late contests with the world, and was now lame and soiled and impotent. The boy with none of the equipments of the skilled sportsman can make himself master of a wounded bird. Mr. Emilius was seeking her in the moment of her weakness, fearing that all chance of success might be over for him should she ever again recover the full use of her wings. All this Lizzie understood, and was able to measure Mr. Emilius at his own value of himself; but then, again, she was forced to ask herself what was her value. She had been terribly mauled by the fowlers. She had been hit, so to say, on both wings, and hardly knew whether she would ever again be able to attempt a flight in public. She could not live alone in Portray Castle for the rest of her days. Ianthe's soul and the Corsair were not, in truth, able to console her

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for the loss of society. She must have somebody to depend upon — ah, some one whom, if it were possible, she might love. She saw no reason why she should not love Mr. Emilius. She had been shockingly ill-treated by Lord Fawn and the Corsair and Frank Greystock. No woman had ever been so knocked about in her affections. She pitied herself with an exceeding pity when she thought of all the hardships which she had endured. Left an early widow, persecuted by her husband's family, twice robbed, spied upon by her own servants, unappreciated by the world at large, ill-used by three lovers, victimised by her selected friend, Mrs. Carbuncle, and now driven out of society because she had lost her diamonds, was she not more cruelly treated than any woman of whom she had ever read or heard? But she was not going to give up the battle, even now. She still had her income, and she had great faith in income. And though she knew that she had been grievously wounded by the fowlers, she believed that time would heal her wounds. The world would not continue to turn its back altogether upon a woman with four thousand pounds a year, because she had told a fib about her necklace. She weighed all this; but the conviction strongest upon her mind was the necessity that she should have a husband. She felt that a woman by herself in the world can do nothing, and that an unmarried woman's strength lies only in the expectation that she may soon be married. To her it was essentially necessary that she should have the protection of a husband who might endure on her behalf some portion of those buffetings to which she seemed to be especially doomed.

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Could she do better with herself than to take Mr. Emilius?

Might she have chosen from all the world, Mr. Emilius was not, perhaps, the man whom she would have selected. There were, indeed, attributes in the man, very objectionable in the sight of some people, which to her were not specially disagreeable. She thought him rather good-looking than otherwise, in spite of a slight defect in his left eye. His coal-black, glossy hair commanded and obtained her admiration, and she found his hooky nose to be handsome. She did not think much of the ancestral blood of which he had boasted, and hardly believed that he would ever become a bishop. But he was popular, and with a rich, titled wife, might become more so. Mr. Emilius and Lady Eustace would, she thought, sound very well, and would surely make their way in society. The man had a grasping ambition about him, and a capacity, too, which, combined, would enable him to preach himself into notoriety. And then in marrying Mr. Emilius, should she determine to do so, she might be sure, almost sure, of dictating her own terms as to settlement. With Lord Fawn, with Lord George, or even with her cousin Frank, there would have been much difficulty. She thought that with Mr. Emilius she might obtain the undisputed command of her own income. But she did not quite make up her mind. She would see him and hear what he had to say. Her income was her own, and should she refuse Mr. Emilius, other suitors would no doubt come.

She dressed herself with considerable care — having first thought of receiving him in bed; but as the

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trial had now gone on without her, it would be convenient that her recovery should be commenced. So she had herself dressed in a white morning wrapper with pink bows, and allowed the curl to be made fit to hang over her shoulder. And she put on a pair of pretty slippers, with gilt bindings, and took a laced handkerchief and a volume of Shelley — and so prepared herself to receive Mr. Emilius. Lizzie, since the reader first knew her, had begun to use a little colouring in the arrangement of her face, and now in honour of her sickness, she was very pale indeed; but still, through the paleness, there was the faintest possible tinge of pink colour shining through the translucent pearl powder. Any one who knew Lizzie would be sure that when she did paint she would paint well.

The conversation at first was, of course, confined to the lady's health. She thought that she was, perhaps, getting better, though, as the doctor had told her, the reassuring symptoms might probably prove only too fallacious. She could eat nothing — literally nothing. A few grapes out of the hot-house had supported her for the last week. This statement was foolish on Lizzie's part, as Mr. Emilius was a man of an inquiring nature, and there was not a grape in the garden. Her only delight was in reading and in her child's society. Sometimes she thought that she would pass away with the boy in her arms and her favourite volume of Shelley in her hand. Mr. Emilius expressed a hope that she would not pass away yet, for ever so many years.

"Oh, my friend," said Lizzie, "what is life, that one should desire it?" Mr. Emilius of course re-

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minded her that, though her life might be nothing to herself, it was very much indeed to those who loved her. "Yes — to my boy," said Lizzie. Mr. Emilius informed her, with confidence, that it was not only her boy that loved her. There were others — or, at any rate, one other. She might be sure of one faithful heart, if she cared for that. Lizzie only smiled and threw from her taper fingers a little paper pellet into the middle of the room — probably with the view of showing at what value she prized the heart of which Mr. Emilius was speaking.

The trial had occupied two days, Monday and Tuesday, and this was now the Wednesday. The result had been telegraphed to Mr. Emilius, of course without any record of the sergeant's bitter speech, and the suitor now gave the news to his lady-love. Those two horrid men had at last been found guilty, and punished with all the severity of the law. "Poor fellows," said Lady Eustace, "poor Mr. Benjamin! Those ill-starred jewels have been almost as unkind to him as to me."

"He 'll never come back alive, of course," said Mr. Emilius. "It 'll kill him."

"And it will kill me too," said Lizzie. "I have a something here which tells me that I shall never recover. Nobody will ever believe what I have suffered about those paltry diamonds. But he coveted them. I never coveted them, Mr. Emilius; though I clung to them because they were my darling husband's last gift to me." Mr. Emilius assured her that he quite understood the facts, and appreciated all her feelings.

And now, as he thought, had come the time for pressing his suit. With widows, he had been told, the

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wooing should be brisk. He had already once asked her to be his wife, and of course she knew the motive of his journey down to Scotland. "Dearest Lady Eustace," he said suddenly, "may I be allowed to renew the petition which I was once bold enough to make to you in London?"

"Petition?" exclaimed Lizzie.

"Ah, yes: I can well understand that your indifference should enable you to forget it. Lady Eustace, I did venture to tell you — that — I loved you."

"Mr. Emilius, so many men have told me that."

"I can well believe it. Some have told you so, perhaps, from base, mercenary motives."

"You are very complimentary, sir."

"I shall never pay you any compliments, Lady Eustace. Whatever may be our future intercourse in life, you will only hear words of truth from my lips. Some have told you so from mercenary motives." Mr. Emilius repeated the words with severity, and then paused to hear whether she would dare to argue with him. As she was silent, he changed his voice, and went on with that sweet, oily tone, which had made his fortune for him. "Some, no doubt, have spoken from the inner depths of their hearts; but none, Lady Eustace, have spoken with such adamantine truth, with so intense an anxiety, with so personal a solicitude for your welfare in this world and the next, as that, or I should rather say those, which glow within this bosom." Lizzie was certainly pleased by the manner in which he addressed her. She thought that a man ought to dare to speak out, and that on such an occasion as this he should venture to do so with some enthusiasm and some poetry. She considered that men generally were

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afraid of expressing themselves, and were as dumb as dogs from the want of becoming spirit. Mr. Emilius gesticulated, and struck his breast, and brought out his words as though he meant them.

"It is easy to say all that, Mr. Emilius," she replied.

"The saying of it is hard enough, Lady Eustace. You can never know how hard it is to speak from a full heart. But to feel it, I will not say is easy; only to me, not to feel it is impossible. Lady Eustace, my heart is devoted to your heart, and seeks its comrade. It is sick with love, and will not be stayed. It forces from me words, words which will return upon me with all the bitterness of gall, if they be not accepted by you as faithful, ay and of great value."

"I know well the value of such a heart as yours, Mr. Emilius."

"Accept it then, dearest one."

"Love will not always go by command, Mr. Emilius."

"No, indeed; nor at command will it stay away. Do you think I have not tried that? Do you believe that for a man it can be pleasant to be rebuffed; that for one who up to this day has always walked on, triumphant over every obstacle, who has conquered every nay that has obstructed his path, it can have less of bitterness than the bitterness of death to encounter a no from the lips of a woman?"

"A poor woman's no should be nothing to you, Mr. Emilius."

"It is everything to me, death, destruction, annihilation, unless I can overcome it. Darling of my heart, queen of my soul, empress presiding over the very spirit of my being, say, shall I overcome it now?"

She had never been made love to after this fashion

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before. She knew, or half knew, that the man was a scheming hypocrite, craving her money, and following her in the hour of her troubles, because he might then have the best chance of success. She had no belief whatever in his love; and yet she liked it, and approved his proceedings. She liked lies, thinking them to be more beautiful than truth. To lie readily and cleverly, recklessly and yet successfullly, was, according to the lessons which she had learned, a necessity in woman and an added grace in man. There was that wretched Macnulty, who would never lie; and what was the result? She was unfit even for the poor condition of life which she pretended to fill. When poor Macnulty had heard that Mr. Emilius was coming to the castle, and had not even mentioned her name, and again, when he had been announced on this very morning, the unfortunate woman had been unable to control her absurd disappointment.

"Mr. Emilius," Lizzie said, throwing herself back upon her couch, "you press me very hard."

"I would press you harder still to gain the glory I covet." And he made a motion with arms as though he had already got her tight within his grasp.

"You take advantage of my illness."

"In attacking a fortress do not the besiegers take all advantages? Dear Lady Eustace, allow me to return to London with the right of protecting your name at this moment, in which the false and the thoughtless are attacking it. You need a defender now."

"I can defend myself, sir, from all attacks. I do not know that any one can hurt me."

"God forbid that you should be hurt. Heaven forbid that even the winds of Heaven should blow to

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harshly on my beloved. But my beloved is subject to the malice of the world. My beloved is a flower all beautiful within and without, but one whose stalk is weak, whose petals are too delicate, whose soft bloom is evanescent. Let me be the strong staff against which my beloved may blow in safety."

A vague idea came across Lizzie's mind that this glowing language had a taste of the Bible about it, and that, therefore, it was in some degree impersonal and intended to be pious. She did not relish piety at such a crisis as this, and was therefore for a moment inclined to be cold; but she liked being called a flower, and was not quite sure whether she remembered her Bible rightly. The words which struck her ear as familiar might have come from Juan and Haidee, and if so, nothing could be more opportune.

"Do you expect me to give you an answer now, Mr. Emilius?"

"Yes, now." And he stood before her in calm dignity, with his arms crossed upon his breast.

She did give him his answer then and there, but first she turned her face to the wall, or rather to the back of the sofa, and burst into a flood of tears. It was a delicious moment to her, that in which she was weeping. She sobbed forth something about her child, something about her sorrows, something as to the wretchedness of her lot in life, something of her widowed heart, something also of that duty to others which would compel her to keep her income in her own hands; and then she yielded herself to his entreaties.

. . . . . .

That evening she thought it proper to tell Miss Macnulty what had occurred. "He is a great preacher of

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the gospel," she said, "and I know no position in the world more worthy of a woman's fondest admiration." Miss Macnulty was unable to answer a word. She could not congratulate her successful rival, even though her bread depended on it. She crept slowly out of the room, and went up-stairs and wept.

Early in the month of June, Lady Eustace was led to the hymeneal altar by her clerical bridegroom. The wedding took place at the Episcopal Church at Ayr, far from the eyes of curious Londoners. It need only be further said that Mr. Emilius could be persuaded to agree to no settlements prejudicial to that marital supremacy which should be attached to the husband; and that Lizzie, when the moment came, knowing that her betrothal had been made public to all the world, did not dare to recede from another engagement. It may be that Mr. Emilius will suit her as well as any husband that she could find, unless it shall be found that his previous career has been too adventurous. After a certain fashion he will, perhaps, be tender to her; but he will have his own way in everything, and be no whit afraid when she is about to die in an agony of tears before his eyes. The writer of the present story may, however, declare that the future fate of this lady shall not be left altogether in obscurity.

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CHAPTER LXXX.

WHAT WAS SAID ABOUT IT ALL AT MATCHING.

THE Whitsuntide holidays were late this year, not taking place till the beginning of June, and were protracted till the 9th of that month. On the 8th Lizzie and Mr. Emilius became man and wife, and on that same day Lady Glencora Palliser entertained a large company of guests at Matching Priory. That the Duke of Omnium was there was quite a matter of course. Indeed in these days Lady Glencora seldom separated herself far, or for any long time, from her husband's uncle, doing her duty to the head of her husband's family in the most exemplary manner. People, indeed, said that she watched him narrowly, but of persons in high station common people will say anything. It was at any rate certain that she made the declining years of that great nobleman's life comfortable and decorous. Madame Max Goesler was also at Matching, a lady whose society always gave gratification to the duke. And Mr. Palliser was also there, taking the rest that was so needful to him; by which it must be understood that after having worked all day he was able to eat his dinner and then only write a few letters before going to bed, instead of attending the House of Commons till two or three o'clock in the morning; but his mind was still deep in quints and semi-tenths. His great measure was even now in committee. His hundred and second

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clause had been carried, with only nine divisions against him of any consequence. Seven of the most material clauses had no doubt been postponed, and the great bone of contention as to the two superfluous farthings still remained before him; nevertheless he fondly hoped that he would be able to send his bill complete to the House of Lords before the end of July. What might be done in the way of amendments there he had hitherto refused to consider. "If the peers choose to put themselves in opposition to the whole nation, on a purely commercial question, the responsibility of all evils that may follow must be at their doors." This he had said as a commoner. A year or two at the furthest — or more probably a few months — would make him a peer; and then no doubt he would look at the matter in a wholly different light. But he worked at his great measure with a diligence which at any rate deserved success; and he now had with him a whole bevy of secretaries, private secretaries, chief clerks, and accountants, all of whom Lady Glencora captivated by her flattering ways and laughed at behind their backs. Mr. Bonteen was there with his wife, repeatedly declaring to all his friends that England would achieve the glories of decimal coinage by his blood and over his grave, and Barrington Erle, who took things much more easily, and Lord Chiltern, with his wife, who would occasionally ask her if she could explain to him the value of a quint, and many others whom it may not be necessary to name. Lord Fawn was not there. Lord Fawn, whose health had temporarily given way beneath the pressing labours of the India board, was visiting his estates in Tipperary.

"She is married to-day, duke, down in Scotland,"

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said Lady Glencora, sitting close to the duke's ear, for the duke was a little deaf. They were in the duke's small morning sitting-room, and no one else was present excepting Madame Max Goesler.

"Married to-morrow down in Scotland. Dear, dear! what is he?" The profession to which Mr. Emilius belonged had been mentioned to the duke more than once before.

"He 's some sort of a clergyman, duke. You went and heard him preach, Madame Max. You can tell us what he 's like."

"Oh, yes; he 's a clergyman of our Church," said Madame Goesler.

"A clergyman of our Church; dear, dear! And married in Scotland! That makes it stranger. I wonder what made a clergyman marry her?"

"Money, duke," said Lady Glencora, speaking very loud.

"Oh, ah, yes; money. So he 'd got money; had he?"

"Not a penny, duke; but she had."

"Oh, ah, yes. I forgot. She was very well left; was n't she? And so she has married a clergyman without a penny. Dear, dear! Did not you say she was very beautiful?"

"Lovely!"

"Let me see, you went and saw her, did n't you?"

"I went to her twice, and got quite scolded about it. Plantagenet said that if I wanted horrors I 'd better go to Madame Tussaud. Did n't he, Madame Max?" Madame Max smiled and nodded her head.

"And what 's the clergyman like?" asked the duke.

"Now, my dear, you must take up the running,"

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said Lady Glencora, dropping her voice. "I ran after the lady but it was you who ran after the gentleman." Then she raised her voice. "Madame Max will tell you all about it, duke. She knows him very well."

"You know him very well; do you? Dear, dear dear!"

"I don't know him at all, duke, but I once went to hear him preach. He 's one of those men who string words together, and do a good deal of work with a cambric pocket-handkerchief."

"A gentleman?" asked the duke.

"About as like a gentleman as you 're like an archbishop," said Lady Glencora.

This tickled the duke amazingly. "He, he, he; I don't see why I should n't be like an archbishop. If I had n't happened to be a duke I should have liked to be an archbishop. Both the archbishops take rank of me. I never quite understood why that was, but they do. And these things never can be altered when they 're once settled. It 's quite absurd nowadays since they 've cut the archbishops down so terribly. They were princes once, I suppose, and had great power. But it 's quite absurd now, and so they must feel it. I have often thought about that a good deal, Glencora."

"And I think about poor Mrs. Arch, who has n't got any rank at all."

"A great prelate having a wife does seem to be an absurdity," said Madame Max, who had passed some years of her life in a Catholic country.

"And the man is a cad; is he?" asked the duke.

"A Bohemian Jew, duke, an impostor who has come over here to make a fortune. We hear that he has a

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wife in Prague, and probably two or three elsewhere. But he has got poor little Lizzie Eustace and all her money into his grasp, and they who know him say that he 's likely to keep it."

"Dear, dear, dear!"

"Barrington says that the best spec he knows out, for a younger son, would be to go to Prague for the former wife and bring her back, with evidence of the marriage. The poor little woman could not fail of being grateful to the hero who would liberate her."

"Dear, dear, dear!" said the duke. "And the diamonds never turned up after all. I think that was a pity, because I knew the late man's father very well. We used to be together a good deal at one time. He had a fine property, and we used to live — but I can't just tell you how we used to live. He, he, he!"

"You had better tell us nothing about it, duke," said Madame Max.

The affairs of our heroine were again discussed that evening, in another part of the Priory. They were in the billiard-room in the evening, and Mr. Bonteen was inveighing against the inadequacy of the law as it had been brought to bear against the sinners who between them had succeeded in making away with the Eustace diamonds. "It was a most unworthy conclusion to such a plot," he said. "It always happens that they catch the small fry and let the large fish escape."

"Whom did you specially want to catch?" asked Lady Glencora.

"Lady Eustace and Lord George de Bruce Carruthers, as he calls himself."

"I quite agree with you, Mr. Bonteen, that it would be very nice to send the brother of a marquis to Botany

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Bay or wherever they go now; and that it would do a deal of good to have the widow of a baronet locked up in the Penitentiary; but you see if they did n't happen to be guilty it would be almost a shame to punish them for the sake of the example."

"They ought to have been guilty," said Barrington Erle.

"They were guilty," protested Mr. Bonteen.

Mr. Palliser was enjoying ten minutes of recreation before he went back to his letters. "I can't say that I attended to the case very closely," he observed, "and perhaps, therefore, I am not entitled to speak about it."

"If people only spoke about what they attended to, how very little there would be to say, eh, Mr. Bonteen?" This observation came, of course, from Lady Glencora.

"But as far as I could hear," continued Mr. Palliser, "Lord George Carruthers cannot possibly have had anything to do with it. It was a stupid mistake on the part of the police."

"I 'm not quite so sure, Mr. Palliser," said Bonteen. "I know Coldfoot told me so." Now, Sir Harry Coldfoot was at this time Secretary of State for the home affairs, and in a matter of such importance, of course, had an opinion of his own.

"We all know that he had money dealings with Benjamin, the Jew," said Mrs. Bonteen.

"Why did n't he come forward as a witness when he was summoned?" asked Mrs. Bonteen triumphantly. "And as for the woman, does anybody mean to say that she should not have been indicted for perjury?"

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"The woman, as you are pleased to call her, is my particular friend," said Lady Glencora. When Lady Glencora made any such statement as this — and she often did make such statements — no one dared to answer her. It was understood that Lady Glencora was not to be snubbed, though she was very much given to snubbing others. She had attained this position for herself by a mixture of beauty, rank, wealth, and courage, but the courage had, of the four, been her greatest mainstay.

Then Lord Chiltern, who was playing billiards with Barrington Erle, rapped his cue down on the floor, and made a speech.

"I never was so sick of anything in my life as I am of Lady Eustace. People have talked about her now for the last six months."

"Only three months, Lord Chiltern," said Lady Glencora in a tone of rebuke.

"And all that I can hear of her is that she has told a lot of lies and lost a necklace."

"When Lady Chiltern loses a necklace worth ten thousand pounds, there will be talk of her," said Lady Glencora.

At that moment Madame Max Goesler entered the room and whispered a word to the hostess. She had just come from the duke, who could not bear the racket of the billiard-room. "Wants to go to bed, does he? Very well. I'll go to him."

"He seems to be quite fatigued with his fascination about Lady Eustace."

"I call that woman a perfect god-send. What should we have done without her?" This Lady Glencora said almost to herself as she prepared to join the duke.

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The duke had only one more observation to make before he retired for the night.

"I 'm afraid you know, that your friend has n't what I call a good time before her, Glencora."

In this opinion of the Duke of Omnium, the readers of this story will perhaps agree.

THE END.

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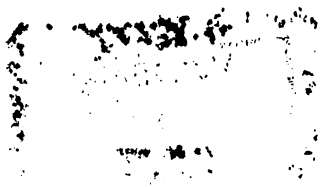

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